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*The Report of the
Fact Finding Team on the
Lawrence Public Schools*

Submitted to: Massachusetts Commissioner of Education
Robert V. Antonucci

Submitted by: Robert Addelson
Juliane Dow
Manthala George, Jr.
Frank W. Haydu III
Vidal Perez

Dated: Monday, January 12, 1998

January 12, 1998

Dr. Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Commissioner Antonucci:

The Fact Finding Team on the Lawrence Public Schools is pleased to submit to you our report.

You have asked us to determine the reasons for chronic under-performance by the Lawrence Public Schools, and to assess the prospects for the District's improvement. Over the past four months, we have conducted interviews, reviewed documents, and analyzed data. Based on all that we have learned, we are unanimous in the findings and conclusions we have reached. We find that:

- There is an obvious and urgent need for improvement in the management and operation of the Lawrence Public Schools. Our inquiry confirms that there are serious deficiencies in the educational programs and services that the District provides. Many Lawrence students are not receiving an adequate education.
- Despite the vastly increased resources now at their disposal, Lawrence school officials have not taken effective action to improve the quality of education provided to the District's students. Deficient leadership and inadequate governance by those elected and employed to oversee and manage the District's schools are the root cause of this failure.
- Without State intervention, the prospects for improvement in the District's performance are poor.

We hope that, after reading this report, the Lawrence officials will invite the State to enter into a collaborative governance arrangement to ensure that the District's current performance problems are solved. We foresee a need for a direct State role in guiding and overseeing the District's management and governance for at least the next three years. We have recommended an oversight model based on local/State cooperation. If this cannot be achieved, we are unanimous in our recommendation for the formal appointment of a receiver or receivership panel.

Immediate, decisive action is required. We trust that our report will assist you and the Board of Education in fulfilling your responsibility to ensure that the District provides an adequate education to all Lawrence public school students.

Sincerely,

Robert Addelson

Juliane Dow

Manthala George, Jr

Frank W. Haydu III

Vidal Perez

REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING TEAM ON UNDER-PERFORMANCE BY THE LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Executive Summary

Last summer the Massachusetts Board of Education, acting pursuant to G.L. c. 69, §1K, determined that there is evidence of *chronic under-performance* by the Lawrence Public Schools (“the District”). In accordance with that statute’s implementing regulations (603 CMR 2.00), Commissioner of Education Robert V. Antonucci appointed a five member independent Fact Finding Team to assess the reasons for the District’s under-performance, and the prospects for its improvement. The Fact-Finding Team has completed its inquiry, which spanned four months, and has prepared this Report.

Background

Significant demographic changes have occurred in the City of Lawrence over the past 20 years, resulting in growth and change in the composition of students attending the Lawrence Public Schools. Seventy-six percent of the District’s current student enrollment are native Spanish speakers; thirty percent have limited proficiency in English.

State aid to the Lawrence Public Schools has doubled since 1993, from roughly \$40 to \$80 million, under the 1993 Education Reform Act. The District’s rate of spending for regular and bilingual education has increased by more than \$2,000 per pupil since 1993, notwithstanding the enrollment growth the District has experienced in those years. This dramatic improvement in the District’s financial capacity has been accomplished with State dollars. This year (1997-1998) the City will contribute, from local revenues, less than 1% of the \$83.4 million it plans to spend for public education.

The massive infusion of new State aid Lawrence has received under Education Reform is intended to enable the District to improve and expand its programs and services. District officials are expected to make the improvements needed to ensure that all students in the District’s receive an adequate education. During 1996 and 1997, information came to light suggesting that the Education Reform aid provided to Lawrence was not being used effectively to accomplish those improvements. After reviewing reports issued by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the State Auditor, the Department’s Coordinated Program Review Team, and a private consultant group engaged by Lawrence school officials, the Board of Education formally determined that there is evidence of chronic under-performance by the District and the Commissioner appointed this Fact Finding Team.

Summary of the Team’s Findings

There are serious deficiencies in the educational programs and services that the District provides. As a result, many Lawrence students are not receiving an adequate education. There is an urgent need for effective management of the District to make essential improvements.

Despite the doubling of its annual operating budget under Education Reform, the District has not embarked on a course of action to make needed improvements. The District’s failure to correct long-standing and well documented deficiencies at Lawrence High School, and its failure to take effective action to support improved educational outcomes for students at all of its schools, is a direct and predictable consequence of deficient leadership and inadequate governance by Lawrence school officials.

Finding Number 1. Many Lawrence students are not receiving an adequate education in the District’s schools.

The performance of Lawrence public school students, measured on multiple indicators of educational achievement and school success, is critically low.

The Team found that:

- The percentage of students who drop out of Lawrence High School each year is even higher now (15.8% in 1996-97) than it was ten years ago when the NEASC first brought its concerns over the School's "excessively high dropout rate" to the attention of District officials. The number of students who graduated from Lawrence High School last spring is significantly lower than the number who dropped out of school in 1996-97 [263 graduated ; 352 dropped out]. Other urban districts, including Lowell and Chelsea, that had similarly high dropout rates ten years ago have implemented effective strategies to keep students in school. Lawrence has not.
- The 92% average rate of school attendance by Lawrence students, though slightly improved since 1993, continues to be among the lowest in the State.
- The rate at which students are excluded from Lawrence public schools for disciplinary reasons is extraordinarily high compared to other, demographically similar, districts. Lawrence's exclusion rate for 1996-97, as a percentage of enrollment, is five times the rate in Lowell and Holyoke, eight times the rate in Boston, and sixteen times the rate in Chelsea.
- Performance of Lawrence students on standardized tests, together with the District's grade retention data, demonstrates a pattern of steadily declining levels of academic performance after grade four, a practice of social promotions from grades 4 through 8, and very high rates of academic failure and grade retention once students enter Lawrence High School, at which point many drop out. Out of 199 Lawrence eleventh graders tested in 1997, only 31 students (16%) demonstrated the ability to read at or above grade level. Fifty-five percent of those tested demonstrated reading skills more than two years below grade level. Forty-eight percent of the class did not even take the tests.

The data on student performance in the District's schools unequivocally demonstrate the *urgent* need for Lawrence students to have the benefit of high quality educational programs, classroom instruction, and services to support improvements in their education.

Finding Number 2. **The District has failed to make reasonable progress toward improving the education provided to Lawrence public school students because Lawrence school officials have provided deficient leadership and inadequate governance.**

District officials have:

- ▶ failed to recognize and acknowledge inadequacies in the District's schools and unify the school community in support of needed improvements;
- ▶ failed to establish and focus on accomplishing priority objectives;
- ▶ failed to implement essential accountability and evaluation systems; and
- ▶ mismanaged District resources.

A. **Failure to recognize and acknowledge inadequacies in the District's schools and unify the school community in support of needed improvements.**

The demographic composition of the City of Lawrence, and of the student population attending its public schools, has changed significantly in the past fifteen years. The students now attending the District's schools come from many cultures, are predominantly native Spanish speaking and mostly low income, and have different educational needs from the student body the District served twenty plus years ago. The instructional programs, methods and materials that may have sufficed to provide an adequate education to Lawrence students twenty years ago are not adequate today.

Lawrence school officials have not provided the leadership required to direct and assist District teachers and administrators through a process of evaluation, planning, and change to ensure that the District's schools provide the range of programs and quality of instruction needed to educate today's students. The District has not established performance goals for its students or schools. The deficient leadership that Lawrence school officials have provided appears to be attributable, in significant part, to low expectations. Many expressed the view that "Our students are doing as well as can be expected."

The changes that are needed in the Lawrence Public Schools cannot be accomplished without the active involvement and shared commitment of the whole community. Lawrence school officials have not exerted leadership to inspire unity of purpose and effective collaboration among various groups in the Lawrence school community. There is evidence of a contentious relationship between the former Superintendent and the local teachers union, alienation between school staff and central office administrators, a competitive relationship between Lawrence school district and City officials over the financial resources that have been provided to the City under Education Reform, and a sense among the District's small but committed group of active parents that local politics and personalities, rather than concern for the education of the City's children, are often the dominant forces influencing the decisions and actions of their District's leaders.

B. Failure to establish and focus on accomplishing priority objectives.

Because District official have not established specific performance goals, and have not objectively assessed their schools and identified barriers to improved student achievement that must be removed, the "improvement efforts" that the District has made are generic, unfocused and ineffective. District officials and personnel have not focused adequate attention and effort on what should be the District's top priorities:

- 1) Implementing a coherent plan to support the acquisition of a high level of English language proficiency by all District students;
- 2) Improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction, using student and teacher performance assessments to identify the specific areas of improvement needed, and providing targeted staff training and coaching to accomplish those improvements;
- 3) Increasing the commitment of students and parents to high achievement by communicating high expectations and employing strategies to increase direct teacher/parent communication and collaboration;
- 4) Establishing alternative programs and services to meet the needs of special populations within the student body at the High School;
- 5) Formulating and implementing a new administrative and organizational structure for Lawrence High School, and correcting other continuing deficiencies that are a barrier to the School's reaccreditation;.
- 6) Developing plans and pursuing City and State support for the construction or acquisition of adequate facilities to house the District's programs.

[These priorities are discussed, in the order set out above, at pages 16 - 21 of the Report.]

C. Failure to implement essential accountability and evaluation systems.

The Lawrence School Committee has not implemented systems to hold the District's Superintendent, central administrative leadership team, school site administrators, or teachers accountable to any particular standard of performance or the accomplishment of any specific District objectives. District administrators, in turn, have failed to 1) establish clear standards and expectations for the performance of District personnel, 2) evaluate the performance of District personnel in relationship to those expectations,

and 3) use this process to target areas that need improvement. The absence of effective accountability and evaluation systems in the District's central office and its schools poses a serious obstacle to improvement of the District's programs and operations.

The Lawrence School Committee has no process for or practice of regularly evaluating the District Superintendent. The District reportedly "adopted" a performance evaluation system for administrators in the fall of 1996 but a year later it still had not been implemented. The Education Reform Act expressly requires that all districts formulate and implement professional standards and evaluation procedures for all school teachers and administrators. Proposed standards and performance evaluation procedures for Lawrence teachers have been the subject of a protracted dispute between the District's administration and its teachers, and have not been implemented.

D. Mismanagement of District Resources

District officials' lack of high standards and clear goals, failure to establish and adhere to priorities, and failure to implement effective accountability and evaluation systems have resulted in mismanagement of the District's human and financial resources. The Team found that:

- 1) District officials have appointed, to key administrative positions within the District's central office and at Lawrence High School, individuals who do not possess appropriate qualifications or adequate skills to perform those jobs effectively.
- 2) District administrators have established an extensive, highly centralized but poorly coordinated administrative bureaucracy that is a significant drain on District resources and has not effectively promoted the accomplishment of critically needed improvements in District programs and services.
- 3) The Lawrence School Committee has failed to establish educationally sound spending priorities and implement effective oversight procedures to ensure proper and prudent use of the District's financial resources.

The District's mismanagement with respect to each of these areas, are discussed, with specific examples, at pages 22 through 25 of the Report.

Finding Number 3: Without State intervention, the prospects for improvement in the District's performance are poor.

The need for improvements in the education provided by the Lawrence Public Schools is urgent. The Lawrence School Committee and those it has chosen to manage the District's schools have demonstrated neither the will nor the capacity to devise and implement effective policies, plans, programs, organizational systems, and accountability mechanisms to provide adequate, appropriate educational programs and services to all students served by the Lawrence Public Schools. Nothing that we have learned during our inquiry gives us confidence that District officials will perform to a higher standard without guidance from, and accountability to, State education officials.

The District's administration is in disarray. Over the next several months the Lawrence School Committee must hire a new, permanent Superintendent. It is essential that the District's new Superintendent have the skills, expertise, and leadership capacities required to accomplish a transformation in attitudes, organization, programs and practices in the Lawrence Public Schools. The District must also employ a new Assistant Superintendent, Finance Director, Personnel Director, and High School principal. It is vital that the individuals hired to fill each of these posts have the needed skills and expertise, and are able to work effectively as a team with the new Superintendent. The District has a history of hiring, into key leadership positions, persons whose skills and expertise do not match the requirements for those positions.

The District also has a history of acting without a clear plan that is based on assessment of its students' needs. Past performance in these areas gives the Team no confidence that the District will recruit and select a new Superintendent and administrative leadership team with the combination of talents, skills and experience the District requires unless State officials intervene to ensure this result.

Conclusion and Recommendation For State Intervention

The Team recommends immediate intervention by State education officials to ensure that the funds Lawrence receives under the Education Reform Act are effectively used to improve the quality of the education provided to Lawrence public school students.

The school improvement objectives the 1993 Education Reform Act was enacted to achieve are of crucial importance to the quality of life of the individual students who are to be the Act's direct beneficiaries, and to the economic, social, and political well-being of the communities where today's students will ultimately live, work, and raise their families. In view of the pattern of failed leadership, inadequate governance, and mismanagement of District resources that has plagued the Lawrence Public Schools in recent years, the Fact Finding Team deems it imperative that the State immediately intervene to guide the operations and oversee the governance of the Lawrence Public Schools.

The Team foresees a need for active State intervention to guide and oversee the District's management and governance for a minimum of three years. The recommendation for State intervention has three elements:

- 1) active State involvement in the recruitment, selection, and successful engagement of a new Superintendent, administrative leadership team, and High School principal, each with the skills and experience needed to lead the District in a process of transformation and improvement.
- 2) oversight and ultimate control over the District's budget, personnel, contract, policy, and strategic planning decisions to insure that serious deficiencies in the District's management and operations are addressed comprehensively, strategically, and as quickly as possible; and
- 3) technical assistance, to aid the District in developing and implementing successful, efficient, cost effective strategies to meet the educational needs of all segments of the population attending the Lawrence Public Schools.

The Team hopes that Lawrence officials, after reviewing the findings and recommendations in this report, will invite the State to oversee their development and implementation of plans to improve the District's schools. If Lawrence officials request, rather than resist, State intervention, education officials can devise a form of oversight that will help to develop and strengthen local school officials' capacity to govern effectively, rather than supplanting their role.

The Team recommends that City and State officials consider forming an Education Oversight Board for the Lawrence Public Schools. Local school officials and administrators would retain primary responsibility for the execution of their respective responsibilities, but would submit their proposed actions for review and approval by the Education Oversight Board. The Education Oversight Board would have ultimate approval authority over District budget, personnel, contract, policy, and strategic planning decisions.

If Lawrence officials fail to submit to State oversight voluntarily, the Team recommends that the Commissioner and Board of Education take whatever steps are necessary, including the appointment of a receiver or receivership panel, to formally establish State control over the Lawrence Public Schools.

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REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING TEAM ON UNDER-PERFORMANCE BY THE LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Board of Education, acting pursuant to G.L. c. 69, §1K, has determined that there is evidence of *chronic under-performance* by the Lawrence Public Schools (“the District”).¹ Commissioner of Education Robert V. Antonucci appointed this Fact Finding Team to assess the reasons for the District’s under-performance, and its prospects for improvement.²

In accordance with the requirements of 603 CMR 2.04(3), we have assessed various aspects of the District’s functioning through a process of information gathering, analysis and deliberation that has included:

- interviews of school district officials and administrators,
- meetings with principals, teachers, parents, and high school students,
- visits to Lawrence High School and two of the District’s elementary schools,
- review of numerous documents related to the administration and operation of District programs and functions, and
- analysis of data on enrollment trends, expenditure patterns, student performance indicators, and student educational outcomes in the Lawrence Public Schools.

We have also reviewed and considered the information contained in reports and notices from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (“NEASC”) to the District concerning conditions at Lawrence High School; the report on Lawrence High School completed in June 1997 by the District’s private consultant, Educational Partners, Inc. (“the Murphy Report”); the reports of NEASC visiting committees that evaluated seven of Lawrence’s elementary schools between 1994 and 1997; the State Auditor’s July 1997 report concerning the operation of the Lawrence Public Schools; and the report of the Department of Education Coordinated Program Review Team that visited the District in April 1997 to monitor the its compliance with requirements for special education, transitional bilingual education, and Title 1 (supplemental services for disadvantaged children) programs.

In this report we set out our findings regarding inadequacies in the District’s present governance and management, and our recommendation for action by the Board of Education and Commissioner to ensure that the District improves its capacity to meet the educational needs of Lawrence students.

¹ The Massachusetts Board of Education first made this determination in June 1997. The District filed suit to block the fact finding process. The Court directed the Board and Commissioner not to proceed with fact finding until the Regulations on Under-Performing Schools and School Districts that had been adopted by the Board at its June meeting were officially published, and thereby given legal effect. On August 7, 1997, after the Regulations’ publication, the Board formally reconsidered and revolted its determination that there is evidence of under-performance by the Lawrence Public Schools.

² G.L. c. 69, §1K directs the Commissioner to appoint a fact finding team to make such an assessment whenever the Board finds that a school district is chronically under-performing. The names and professional backgrounds of the five individuals who have served as members of the Lawrence Public Schools Fact Finding Team appear at Appendix A.

II. BACKGROUND

The City of Lawrence is an older, urban, industrialized city located on the Merrimack River, near the intersection of Routes 495 and 93, approximately 26 miles north of Boston. Textile mills were the backbone of the City's economy from its founding in the 1850s through the first half of this century, and remnants of that industry remain today. Employment opportunities in the mills made Lawrence a port of entry and "melting pot" for many Irish, Polish, Italian, Syrian, and French-Canadian immigrants up to and around the turn of the century. At its peak, around 1920, Lawrence was reported to have a population of approximately 94,207. Ten of the seventeen city owned buildings currently used by the Lawrence Public Schools were built during the period from 1852 to 1931, Lawrence's "golden years" as a leading textile producer.

The City of Lawrence's total population dropped by about a third between 1920 and 1980. The City witnessed decade after decade of steady population decline as textile and related industries closed or relocated. One new school building was built in the early 1950s and two in the 1960s. For the twenty years that followed there was no new school construction or renovation as the City's economy remained stagnant and its population continued to decline. Census data for 1980 shows Lawrence with 63,175 residents, down from 66,915 in 1970. Almost all of District's current school site administrators, and a large percentage of the teachers currently employed by the Lawrence Public Schools, began their careers teaching in Lawrence in the late 1960s and 1970s.

A. Recent History of the City and its Schools

The 1980 census data reveals that even as total City population continued to decline during the 1970s, a population shift was beginning to occur. The migration of families of European ancestry out of Lawrence appears to have continued, but a new wave of immigration into Lawrence, largely from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, and to a lesser extent from Southeast Asia, was beginning to occur. In 1970, only 2,327 of Lawrence's 66,915 residents (3.4%) identified Spanish as the dominant language of their parents. By 1980, 10,296 Lawrence's residents (16.3%) identified themselves as "of Hispanic origin." In 1983, the first year in which this data was collected by State education officials, almost a third of the students enrolled in Lawrence public schools came from homes where Spanish was the dominant language spoken. Thirteen percent of those students were reported to be limited English proficient and in need of bilingual education. By the end of the decade, the number of Hispanic residents in Lawrence had risen to 29,237 according to 1990 census data, 41.6% of the City's total population.

Significantly, the census data indicates that Lawrence experienced only a 2% increase in number of households between 1980 and 1990, while the City's total population expanded by 11.1% during that decade. This change in the size and composition of families, together with the Spanish language dominance of the City's new immigrants, has had a profound affect on the Lawrence Public Schools.

A significant portion of the population growth Lawrence has experienced during the 1980s and 1990s has been comprised of school age children, many living at or near the poverty level. According to the census data, per capita income in Lawrence as of 1990 was \$9,686, the lowest of any municipality in Massachusetts. Twenty-nine percent of all households in the City had an annual income under \$10,000; with an additional 25% having income under \$25,000. By 1990 native Spanish speaking students comprised 60% of those enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools; half of those student were limited English proficient.

In the years since 1980, the Lawrence Public Schools have experienced the compounding and, for many within the school system, confounding effects of both growth in size and change in the demographic composition of Lawrence's school aged population. During the 1980s, when many school districts in Massachusetts were experiencing some enrollment growth in the early elementary grades but overall school enrollment was on the decline statewide, the Lawrence Public Schools experienced significant enrollment growth across all grade levels. Enrollment in the District increased by a third, from 8,197 to 10,751 between 1982 and 1992.³

Two new elementary schools, the Frost (1986) and the Arlington (1987), were constructed in Lawrence in the mid 1980s, near the end of Dr. Eugene Thayer's tenure as Lawrence's superintendent. These new facilities helped meet the district's immediate need for additional space and updated facilities to serve its growing student body, but *A Survey for Educational Facilities with Long Range Plans*, prepared for the district by an architectural and planning firm in 1988, clearly documented the District's need for additional new school construction, as well as the renovation and expansion of several of Lawrence's "newer," (i.e., post 1914) school buildings, to accommodate what was accurately projected to be a continuing upward trend in enrollment through the late 1980s and 1990s.

In the mid-1980s, concerns about the adequacy of the programs and services being provided to meet the educational needs of students at Lawrence High School were brought to the District's attention by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). At the conclusion of its 1986 decennial review of the school, the NEASC recommended continued accreditation of Lawrence High School, but expressed serious concerns regarding "the school's excessive drop-out rate."⁴ The NEASC put the school on notice of the need for evaluation of the school's philosophy and objectives, leadership for the bilingual, special education, and school testing programs, development of a community relations program, proper screening and placement of students, curriculum evaluation, and provision of bilingual technical/vocational services and courses.

In 1987, Dr. Thayer resigned, and the Lawrence School Committee appointed James Scully to be the District's new Superintendent.⁵ Three years later, in 1990, the NEASC reviewed Lawrence High School's Five Year Progress Report and placed the school "on warning" because of its failure to comply with the Commission's standards on curriculum and instruction and community support and involvement, and its failure to make reasonable progress in carrying out the recommendations contained in NEASC's 1986 report. Specific deficits in staffing, leadership, supervision, communication, curriculum, programs, services and facilities were cited in the NEASC notice.

The City of Lawrence's tax base continued to decline through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, increasingly constraining the City's capacity to maintain and operate its schools. During this same period, state support for public education, both in terms of local aid and funding for state level programs and operations, declined as the State wrestled with the financial consequences of a regional economic recession. Consequently, the

³ That number has continued to climb in the years since 1994. The District's reported enrollment as of October 1, 1997 is 12,104. 76.3% of those currently enrolled are Hispanic. 28.5% of the Hispanic students currently enrolled in the District's schools are limited English proficient. A chart detailing the District's enrollment growth from 1978 - 1997 is included at [Appendix B](#).

⁴ Lawrence High School's drop out rate for the 1986-87 school year was 14.6%. High School enrollment that year was 2,009.

⁵ Mr. Scully had worked for the District since 1970, first as an elementary school teacher, then as an elementary principal.

Lawrence Public Schools had very limited resources available in the late 1980s and early 1990s to address the changing needs of, and meet the new educational challenges presented by, its growing population of economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient students.

Lawrence was one of the four economically distressed school systems (Lawrence, Holyoke, Brockton, and Chelsea) profiled in a special report issued by the Board of Education in November 1991, in which the Board called for legislative action to reform the funding, organization, and delivery of public education to ensure an adequate education for all Massachusetts public school students.⁶

In 1992, when Lawrence High School again failed to demonstrate substantial progress toward addressing the deficits identified by NEASC in 1986 and 1990, the school's accreditation was put on probation. The NEASC expressed "continuing concern" at that time regarding the "insufficient level of financial support for the school, and resultant limitation on the school's provision of an appropriate curriculum for all its students." At the end of the 1992-93 school year Lawrence High School's principal resigned to accept a position in another district. Vice Principal Elizabeth Devlin served as interim principal through the next school year. In June 1994, Superintendent Scully appointed William Carey, a principal of one of the District's elementary schools, to become Lawrence High School's principal.⁷

Notwithstanding its financial constraints, in 1993 the City approved construction of one additional elementary school. The District's plans for construction of what is now known as South Lawrence East Elementary School, designed to accommodate up to 1500 students in kindergarten through grade 8, were approved by City and State officials, and the project was approved for 90% State funding through the School Building Assistance program. The school was completed and put into service in 1995.⁸

B. New Opportunities and Raised Expectations Under Education Reform

In the years since 1993, the City of Lawrence has received a massive infusion of new state aid for public education. The funding provisions of 1993 Education Reform Act are designed to ensure all districts, regardless of local funding capacity, "a consistent commitment of resources sufficient to provide a high quality public education to every child." The Legislature and Governor have made good on the State's commitment to alleviate the financial barriers to improvement of the education available to students in low wealth Massachusetts communities.

Five years ago, the amount appropriated to the Lawrence School Committee to support the District's annual

⁶ The information contained in the Board's "Report of the Committee on Distressed School Systems and School Reform" served as a catalyst to advance the *McDuffy v. Board of Education* case to resolution of the constitutional issues raised in that litigation, and helped to prompt legislative action on what ultimately was enacted as the 1993 Education Reform Act.

⁷ William Carey, was employed by the District in 1971 as an elementary school teacher, and in 1975 was promoted to elementary school principal. Mr. Carey was the principal of Lawrence High School Carey from June 1994 through June 1997. Vice Principal Devlin also began her teaching career in Lawrence in 1971. She is, again, serving as the High School's Acting Principal this school year.

⁸ Lawrence's school system is configured on a K-8 (elementary) and 9-12 (secondary) model. The District does not have separate "middle schools." The District presently operates a total of 18 schools; one high school, fifteen elementary schools, and two early childhood education (pre-kindergarten) sites. The elementary schools have various configurations. Seven serve students all the way through grade 8. The other eight are smaller "feeder schools" that only house the early elementary grades (K - 3, 4, or 5).

operating expenses was approximately \$25 million. This year the Committee's appropriation is more than \$78 million. This dramatic enlargement of the District's capacity to finance improvements in the educational programs and services provided by its schools, is a direct result of the State's current Education Reform initiative and has been accomplished almost entirely with State dollars. The City's own contribution to the support of its schools has actually decreased each year since 1994. This year (1997-1998) the City will fund, from local revenues, less than 1% of the \$83.4 million⁹ it has budgeted for public education.

As a result of this infusion of new funding, the District's rate of per pupil spending has increased by more than \$2,000 per student in the last five years, notwithstanding the significant enrollment growth it has experienced during those years. The District's reported rate of spending, per pupil, for regular education last year (1997) was \$5,148, up from \$2,859 in 1992. The District reported spending \$5,137 per pupil for bilingual education in 1997, up from \$3,093 in 1992.¹⁰

The State's greatly increased financial commitment under the Education Reform Act is one component of a larger, comprehensive statutory scheme to improve the quality of the education provided in all of the Commonwealth's public schools. To realize the Education Reform Act's goal of an adequate education for all Massachusetts public school students, local school officials are expected to:

- 1) set performance goals for students and schools;
- 2) systematically assess the performance of students, personnel, and school programs, and use the information obtained from these assessments to determine the improvements needed to achieve those goals;
- 3) formulate and implement policies, strategies, and systems to improve the effectiveness, and where needed expand the range, of educational programs and services provided by the district; and
- 4) strategically deploy the financial resources assured by the Education Reform Act to accomplish the improvements needed to promote and support successful educational outcomes for all students, of all backgrounds and ability levels, at all grade levels within the district's schools.¹¹

The Act requires each school district to adopt professional standards and implement formal evaluation procedures for all public school teachers and administrators. It also expressly requires districts to formulate annual plans for the professional development of teachers and administrators to ensure that the curriculum and instruction improvements called for by the Act are accomplished.

The Act permits local school officials to determine what allocation of available resources will most efficiently and effectively support the operation of their schools and the accomplishment of improvement objectives. The

⁹ The City's budget includes \$78.7 million appropriated for expenditure by the Lawrence School Committee, approximately 3 million in charter and school choice tuition assessments, and \$1.6 million in City costs for administration and maintenance attributed to the public schools.

¹⁰ See Appendix C.

¹¹ See G.L. c. 69, §§1, 1I -IK and c. 71, §§ 37, 38, and 38Q.

level of funding presumed necessary for that support, however, is based on a statutory formula¹² that presumes districts will need to spend more, per pupil, to operate adequate educational programs for students at the secondary school level than for those in the elementary grades, and more for students with special education or transitional bilingual education needs than for students in regular education programs. The statutory formula also recognizes that districts will need to provide expanded educational services, at additional cost, to fill gaps in the educational opportunities and supports available to students from low income families.

C. Developments That Precipitated The Appointment of This Fact Finding Team

In June 1996, the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune and Boston Globe published reports concerning the Lawrence Public Schools' expenditure of some \$300,000 in Education Reform funds to purchase laptop computers for members of the Lawrence School Committee and various non-instructional personnel. News of these expenditures generated controversy as to the legality, propriety and prudence of District officials' expenditure of State funds appropriated to support needed improvements in the City's public schools.

These concerns were heightened when, in the fall of 1996, the results of the NEASC's 1996 decennial review of Lawrence High School became known. The NEASC review committee found that, notwithstanding the District's vastly improved financial condition under Education Reform, long-standing, educationally significant deficiencies in the High School's curriculum, instruction, accountability systems, finances, administration, faculty, and facility, repeatedly brought to the District's attention during the preceding ten years, remained uncorrected. The NEASC, after considering the District's responses to the visiting committee's findings, voted to terminate Lawrence High School's accreditation. In doing so, NEASC officials wrote:

A fundamental and compelling concern expressed by the Commission is the absence of effective school system and school building administrative leadership founded in a clear understanding of the school's long-standing, critical and comprehensive issues and focused on the development of strategies and implementation of programs and processes to effect necessary changes. The resulting absence of a vision for change and growth, accompanied by congruent short and long range plans for the appropriate resolution of identified issues, has continued to profoundly and negatively affect student learning.

In addition to these overarching comments, the NEASC cited 38 specific, still uncorrected, deficiencies at the High School as evidence that the school did not meet NEASC standards. The deficiencies cited include:

- failure to set high expectations for all students particularly as they relate to English literacy of students for whom English is not their native language;
- continued failure to provide curriculum and instruction that reflect a clear, unified and common focus to meet the needs of the range of students served by the school;
- inadequate curricular articulation within and between departments, and lack of department meeting time to provide for articulation;
- lack of connection between the system's technology plan, subsequent purchase of computers, and short and long-term curricular and instructional goals;

¹² G.L. c.70, section 2.

- lack of effective administrative communication among all segments of the school community, and lack of process to facilitate communications between central office administrators and high school faculty to ensure collaborative decision-making and shared solutions to school concerns;
- the existence of only one functioning science laboratory, in deplorable condition, despite the school's previous reporting of a plan and time-line for renovation of the school's science laboratories;
- unresolved problems of wet carpeting in several areas of the building due to unrepainted roof leaks, presenting health and safety concerns;
- limited professional development and in service programs for faculty and administration to 1) remedy the school's fragmented, ineffective curricular processes, 2) modify instructional practices which do not reflect current research and practice, 3) make use of assessment information to improve teaching and learning, 4) integrate a variety of technologies for instructional purposes;
- failure to prioritize the use of newly-available State Education Reform funds to remedy long-standing problems of seriously inadequate science labs, insufficient textbooks, inadequate instructional supplies and equipment, and an insufficient variety of technological hardware and software.

Concerns arising from the laptop expenditure controversy and the NEASC findings led the Commissioner of Education, in December 1996, to request a formal inquiry into District spending practices by the State Auditor. The findings reported by the State Auditor in his June 1997 report on the Lawrence Public Schools include:

- Questionable administrative decisions to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on non-instructional items and special programs at a time when Lawrence High School was on notice of the imminent loss of its accreditation due, in part, to the district's inadequate investment in staff, facilities, instructional materials and equipment at that school;
- Spending at levels below Education Reform's foundation budget allotments for books and equipment, expanded programs, professional development, and extraordinary maintenance;
- Executive administration expenses significantly above the national average, and a 60% increase in executive administration salaries over the two year period from fiscal year 1994 through 1996;
- Inadequate administrative controls over \$1,690,776 in consultant contracts;
- Questionable and unreported fringe benefits totaling as much as \$77,838 to certain members of Lawrence Public Schools' administrative staff.

In March of 1997, Lawrence school officials engaged Educational Partners, Inc., a private consultant group led by John L. Murphy, Ed.D, to provide a "second opinion" concerning the state of education at Lawrence High School. In June 1997, shortly after the State Auditor released his Report, Dr. Murphy's group provided the District with a detailed report of its findings. The Murphy group found continuing evidence of the same serious, chronic deficiencies at Lawrence High School cited by the NEASC when it reviewed the school a year earlier. Like the NEASC, the Murphy group concluded that the chronic deficiencies in the High School's operations and educational offerings are due in large part to the absence of adequately qualified, competent leadership by school and district administrators.

In June 1997, the Department of Education's Coordinated Program Review Team issued its final report on

the results of a scheduled, on-site review, conducted in April 1997, to assess the District's compliance with state and federal requirements for Special Education, Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), and Title 1 programs for economically disadvantaged students. The Coordinated Program Review team reported inadequate implementation by the Lawrence Public Schools of numerous policy and procedural requirements for its Special Education and TBE programs and non-compliance with personnel certification requirements for all three programs.

The Department's Coordinated Program Review Team also found inadequate program implementation in the TBE program, specifically: 1) academic instruction for TBE students occurs primarily in Spanish, with the result that most students do not develop adequate English skills and often fail in mainstream, monolingual English classes; and, 2) a majority of students in the District's TBE programs are not participating consistently in art, music and physical education programs with their English-speaking peers, which further diminishes their opportunity to develop English language skills.

III. TEAM FINDINGS

Finding Number 1. Many Lawrence public school students are not receiving an adequate education in the District's schools.

The "paramount goal" of the 1993 Education Reform Act is:

*to provide a public education system of sufficient quality to extend to **all children** the opportunity to reach their full potential and to lead lives as participants in the political and social life of the commonwealth and as contributors to its economy. G.L. c. 69, §1.*

It is not enough for public schools to provide an adequate education for **some** students. The mission of Massachusetts public schools is to provide an adequate education to students of all backgrounds and life circumstances. The information which we have gathered and reviewed during our fact-finding process in Lawrence clearly demonstrates that the instructional programs and school support services being provided to students in its elementary schools, as well as at Lawrence High School, fall far short of fulfilling this critical goal.

Our review of the data indicates that the performance of Lawrence public school students, measured on multiple indicators of educational achievement and school success, is critically low. We find no evidence in the data that we reviewed that the District has taken effective action over the past five years to improve the overall level of academic achievement of District students. What we do find in the data, is evidence that 1) an extraordinarily high number of students are excluded from the District's schools every year, and 2) the percentage of students who drop out of Lawrence High School each year is even higher now than it was ten years ago when the NEASC first brought its concerns over the School's "excessively high dropout rate" to the attention of District officials.¹³

Student Dropout Rate

Sixteen percent of the 1,969 students enrolled at Lawrence High School in October of 1996 dropped out of school before the end of the 1996-97 school year, the majority before completing 9th grade. The District's year end student data reported to the Department of Education indicates, in fact, that the number of students who graduated from Lawrence High School last spring was significantly lower than the number who dropped

¹³ See Chart 1, Appendix D.

out of school during the 1996-97 school year.¹⁴

Lawrence school officials have reported some improvement over the last several years in the District's "adjusted dropout rate." The adjusted dropout rate is the number of students who drop out in a given school year, minus those students who re-enroll in school by October 1 of the following school year. Lawrence administrators told us that they have been making great efforts to reduce the District's dropout rate. They pointed to the improved *adjusted* dropout rates they reported in 1995 (8.6%) and 1996 (6.4) as evidence of their success.¹⁵

Apparently the efforts District administrators have been making have focussed on re-enrolling students who have already dropped out of the District's school.¹⁶ We found no evidence that the District had gathered and analyzed data on the reasons why students drop out in the first place, nor did we find evidence that the District has formulated and implemented a strategy to bring down that rate.

As the comparison data in Chart 1 at Appendix D indicates, the "excessively high" dropout rate Lawrence had ten years ago was not unique. Chelsea Public Schools' dropout rate ten years ago (17.4% in 1987) was even higher than Lawrence's (14.5%). Chelsea, however, has significantly lowered the number of students dropping out of its high school in recent years. Chelsea High School's unadjusted dropout rate for 1987 was 7.5%; its adjusted rate was 4.0%. Lowell, another district that had a very high dropout rate similar to Lawrence's ten years ago (13.6% in 1987), has also made dramatic improvements. After several years of steadily improving rates, Lowell had only 4.1% of its high school students drop out of school in 1997. Its 1996-97 adjusted rate, accounting for students who re-enrolled in school this fall, was 3.1%.

Lawrence has not achieved similar improvements. Its 15.8% unadjusted dropout rate for 1997 is almost five percent higher than Holyoke's, which after Lawrence appears to have the highest unadjusted dropout rate in the State. Even after "adjusting" for students the District re-enrolled this fall, it appears likely that Lawrence (with a 1997 adjusted rate of 10.7%) will top this year's list of districts with the highest incidence of students dropping out of school without attaining a high school education.¹⁷

Attendance

The data indicates that there has been incremental improvement in the District's attendance rate over the past

¹⁴ Only 263 students graduated. A total of 352 students dropped out, 311 from Lawrence High School; and 41 from the District's elementary schools. 25 additional students were excluded from the Lawrence Public Schools during the 1996-97 school year either permanently (4), or for the remainder of the school year (21).

¹⁵ See Chart 1, Appendix D. Based on data recently reported by the District concerning the number of students who dropped out last year that re-enrolled this September, the Department of Education has calculated the District's adjusted rate for 1997 to be 10.7%, more than four percentage points higher than the rate the District reported in 1996.

¹⁶ Further study of school district records would be necessary to determine how many of the students the District has re-enrolled through this effort ultimately graduated from high school, and how many again quit school without receiving a high school education.

¹⁷ Department of Education staff are currently in the process of compiling and analyzing, and have not yet published, their report on the 1996-97 student data which all Massachusetts schools and districts are required to report. At our request, they provided us with "pre-publication" data for the most recent year for the comparison districts that we included in Chart 1 at Appendix D.

few years from a district-wide average of 89.9% in 1993 to 92% in 1997.¹⁸ Even with this improvement, though, the rate of school attendance by Lawrence continues to be among the lowest in the State. Very low rates of school attendance are reported by *all* of Lawrence's schools.

Low attendance is a problem not unique to Lawrence. Most of the Commonwealth's other urban districts have low attendance rates. The critical question in assessing school district performance is: what steps are being taken by District officials to identify the reasons for low attendance and to promote consistent student attendance.

We asked Lawrence administrators whether they have analyzed the attendance data to determine whether the District's significantly below state average annual attendance rate results from frequent or extended absences by an identifiable subset of the student population, widespread low attendance in the District on certain days or weeks of the scheduled school year, or widespread below average attendance by a majority of the student body. Such an analysis of the District's attendance patterns is key to the formulation of plan to effect improvement on this measure of District performance. We were told no such study of Lawrence student attendance patterns has been done. The only current use of attendance data, we were told, is to identify students who are chronically truant. The District has a protocol for contacting parents in those cases.

Suspension and Exclusion

The data that we reviewed indicates that inconsistent participation in scheduled instruction as a result of suspension or exclusion¹⁹ from school is another barrier to academic achievement by many Lawrence students. We found the rate at which students are excluded from Lawrence's schools to be extraordinarily high compared to the exclusion rates of the comparison districts whose data we reviewed.²⁰ In raw numbers, Lawrence excluded roughly *three times as many* students in 1995-96 and nearly *twice as many* students in 1996-97 than the total number of students excluded in those years from the Boston Public Schools, which serve over 50,000 more students than Lawrence's schools. Lawrence's exclusion rate for 1996-97, as a percentage of enrollment, is five times the rate in Lowell and Holyoke, and eight times the rate in Boston. We consider this data to be cause for serious concern. It indicates that the District's own policies and practices may be contributing, to a substantial degree, to the limited academic attainment and ultimate school failure of large numbers of Lawrence public school students.

In light of the gravity of what we learned from our initial review of the District exclusion data, we requested more detail on the incidence of exclusion, by grade level, and data on the incidence of shorter term "suspensions" in the District's schools. We were even more disturbed by what this data revealed.

We expected to see a high rate of suspension and exclusion at Lawrence's admittedly troubled High School. What we found instead was that more than two thirds (172 out of a total of 264) of the students excluded from the Lawrence Public Schools in 1995 - 1996 were *elementary school* students.²¹ The number of third, fourth,

¹⁸ See Chart 2, Appendix D. Our review of the most recent attendance data filed by the District (unaudited) indicates that average attendance at individual District schools in 1996 - 97 ranged from a low of 83.6% at Lawrence High School to a high of 93.9% at the Leahy Elementary School.

¹⁹ For State reporting purposes, data is separated into these two categories. Districts report the number of students "suspended," which means students who were not permitted to participate in their assigned educational program for up to ten consecutive days. Students refused participation in their assigned program for more than 10 consecutive days are considered to be "excluded" from school. Students may be excluded from school for a specified number of days, for the balance of the school year, or permanently.

²⁰ See Chart 1 at Appendix D.

²¹ See Chart 3 at Appendix D. We also reviewed data compiled for us by the Department of Education on the rate of exclusions of Lawrence students in 1996-97 to see if there was a similar pattern. We found that the total

and fifth grade students excluded in Lawrence (39 students) was, by itself, significantly higher than the total number of students excluded from *all grades at all* of Lowell's public schools combined that year.²²

The data which we reviewed on the incidence of suspension of District students in 1995-96 followed the same pattern as the District's exclusions. More than two thirds (1,017 out of 1,395) of the out-of-school suspensions reported by the District in 1995-96 were of elementary students. Fourteen percent of the District's fourth graders, almost 12% of the District's fifth graders, and 21% of all sixth graders were disciplined with out-of-school suspensions in 1995-96. Similar percentages of students were suspended from their assigned programs, but kept in school. The District's exclusion and suspension data suggests that the norm in Lawrence's elementary schools is simply to remove students who are considered "troublesome" from class.

The fact that by grades 6-8 more than a quarter of all students are viewed as behaviorally unmanageable clearly demonstrates that the District's current behavior management and discipline strategies are not effective, and that the schools are not meeting the educational needs of a large segment of their current student population. To improve the educational outcomes for these students, the District must focus on devising strategies and implementing instructional techniques that will successfully engage students as productive participants in their own education. The District needs programs and services to help motivate and support students to succeed in school, rather than pursuing policies that promote academic failure and encourage students to leave school permanently as soon as they turn sixteen.

Academic Assessment Data

The performance of Lawrence public school students on the standardized academic assessments that we reviewed further convinces us that a large percentage of the District's students are not receiving an adequate education. The majority of the Lawrence students tested in the 1994 and 1996 administrations of the Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), at each of the three grade levels tested, performed at or below what was designated "Level One," the lowest of four performance levels measured by the MEAP, in all four of the content areas tested.²³ No educationally significant improvement in the performance of District students is evident when the District's 1994 and 1996 MEAP data are compared.

In 1997 the State administered the Iowa Test of Reading at Grade 3, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skill to Grade 10 students statewide. Thirty-six percent of the District's third graders demonstrated the ability to read (in English) at what was deemed to be a *proficient* or *advanced* level (compared to 69%, on average, statewide), as measured by this test. Twenty-five percent more could read at a basic level (21% of third graders, statewide scored at the basic reader level on this test). Ten percent scored at the pre-reader level. Twenty-nine percent of the District's third graders did not take the test.

On the tenth grade Iowa test, the Lawrence students who participated scored, on average, at the 29th percentile in reading, and the 32-34th percentiles in the other three subjects tested. Statewide, the average percentile

number of exclusions in 1997 was lower than in 1995-96, but the pattern of exclusions was the same. Roughly 73% (139 of 189) of the students excluded from Lawrence schools in 1996-1997 were enrolled in one of the District's elementary schools. The Department did not have suspension and grade retention data for 1996-97 to permit a comparison of those numbers.

²² See Chart 1 at Appendix D.

²³ The percentages vary from 52 - 70%, depending on subject, grade, and year. See Chart 1, Appendix E. Students who performed at "Level One" on the MEAP are described in the Department of Education's test result report as knowing some basic facts, but lacking conceptual understanding.

ranks for tenth graders who participated in this test were 64 in reading, and 58-65 in the other content areas.²⁴

At our request, the District's assessment coordinator provided us with data on the performance of Lawrence students on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests ("MAT-7" tests) that the District administered to regular education students in grades 2 through 11 in 1996 and 1997.²⁵ This data evidences a pattern of steadily declining levels of student performance over successive grades in the District's elementary schools.

At grade four, a majority of the students who participated in these tests demonstrated English language arts and math skills at or slightly below grade level. Beginning at grade five the data evidences a steady downward trend, with increasing percentages of students falling further behind grade level in each successive year through grade nine. This pattern of worsening performance as students proceed through their elementary years is a clear indication that Lawrence's elementary schools are failing to meet the educational needs of a significant proportion of the "English proficient" regular education students they serve. We found almost no data on the academic performance levels being attained by Lawrence's *limited* English proficient students. We fear, based on what we have read in the NEASC, Murphy group, and DOE Coordinated Program Review reports, that they are faring even worse.

Our review of the District's grade retention data²⁶ indicates that very few children, regardless of their achievement level, are retained in grades 4 - 8 in the District's elementary schools. This pattern of inadequate skill acquisition and social promotion culminates, for many, in academic failure when they reach 9th grade and enter Lawrence High School.²⁷ As the dropout statistics which we have already discussed demonstrate, many Lawrence students who are unable to perform successfully when they reach 9th grade simply give up and drop out of school.

The MEAP, Iowa, and MAT-7 data on performance by Lawrence's 10th and 11th grade students indicates that many, and perhaps a substantial majority, of those who do remain in school and eventually graduate from Lawrence High School lack the basic academic skills and language competency required for successful employment in most above-minimum-wage jobs available in today's economy. Of the 199 Lawrence 11th graders who took the MAT-7 in 1997 (52% of the 11 grade class), only 31 students (16%) demonstrated the ability to read at or above grade level. Fifty-five percent of those tested demonstrated reading skills more than two years below grade level.

It is important to note that the available data in the performance of Lawrence students on standardized academic assessments does not provide a complete picture of the level of academic performance of *all* the District's students. More than a quarter of the District's elementary students, and more than half of all the District's high school students did not even take the tests discussed above. These non-participants were either "exempted" from the tests due to limited English proficiency or disability or did not attend school on the days the tests were given.²⁸ We suspect that the academic proficiencies of the high percentages of students who

²⁴ See Chart 2, Appendix E.

²⁵ See Chart 3, Appendix E.

²⁶ See Chart 3, Appendix D.

²⁷ Out of a total 9th grade enrollment of 768 in 1995 - 96, more than 35% were either retained in grade at the end of that year (115 students), or dropped out of school altogether (159 students). Our review of recently submitted data for the 1996-97 school year indicates that this pattern was repeated again in that school year.

²⁸ The District's participation rates in the MEAP and Iowa assessments were far below the state average, and significantly below the rates of the urban "comparison districts" to which Lawrence's performance was

did not participate in these tests are no greater, and in many cases may be at substantially lower levels, than the performance levels of those that participated in the MEAP, Iowa, and MAT-7 tests.²⁹

As with the attendance data referenced above, the simple fact that a majority of the Lawrence students who participated in the MEAP, Iowa, and MAT-7 assessments performed at distressingly low levels is not, in our view, evidence that the District is “under-performing.” Students in a number of the Commonwealth’s other urban districts are performing at similarly low levels at this point.

However, the data does unequivocally demonstrate the *urgent* need for Lawrence students to have the benefit of high quality educational programs, classroom instruction, and support services to support improvements in their education. The measure of the District’s performance is whether District officials recognize the urgent need to improve the academic performance of their students, and are taking purposeful, educationally sound actions, and making effective use of available resources, to ensure that *all* of the District’s students have the opportunity to experience academic success. Lawrence school officials, as we discuss below, have utterly failed on both counts.

Finding Number 2. The District has failed to make reasonable progress toward improving the education provided to Lawrence public school students because Lawrence school officials have provided deficient leadership and inadequate governance. We find that District officials have:

- ▶ **failed to recognize and acknowledge inadequacies in the District’s schools and unify the school community in support of needed improvements.**
- ▶ **failed to establish and focus on accomplishing priority objectives.**
- ▶ **failed to implement essential accountability and evaluation systems.**
- ▶ **mismanaged District resources.**

Over the past five years the State has fulfilled its commitment, under the Education Reform Act, to provide the City of Lawrence with the financial resources needed to support improvements in Lawrence Public Schools. State aid to support annual operating expenses of the Lawrence Public Schools has doubled over the past five years. The City will receive more than \$79 million this year in “Chapter 70” aid to support its public schools.

We find that Lawrence school officials have failed to make effective use of this massive increase in the District’s annual operating budget to support improved academic performance and enhanced educational outcomes for students. This failure is a direct and predictable consequence of deficient leadership and ineffectual governance by the Lawrence School Committee and the District’s top administrators.

A. Failure to Recognize and Acknowledge Inadequacies in the District’s Schools and Unify the School Community in Support of Needed Improvements.

The demographic composition of the City of Lawrence, and of the student population attending its public schools, has changed significantly in the past fifteen years. The students now attending the District’s schools come from many cultures, are predominantly native Spanish speaking and mostly low income, and have

compared in the testing reports published by the Department of Education.

²⁹ It is crucial that the District implement an assessment program to begin objectively measuring the performance, and assessing the academic progress, of the roughly 30% of District students who are enrolled in its bilingual education program. Meaningful assessment data is needed to assess the level of English proficiency and academic proficiency in other subject areas being achieved by this substantial segment of the District’s student body.

different educational needs from the student body the District served twenty plus years ago. The instructional programs, methods and materials that may have sufficed to provide an adequate education to Lawrence students twenty years ago are not adequate today.

It is the duty of Lawrence school officials to direct and assist the District's teachers and administrators, the majority of whom have been in the district for more than twenty years, through a process of evaluation, planning, and change to ensure that the District's schools provide the range of programs and quality of instruction needed to educate today's students. We find that Lawrence school officials have not provided the leadership required to effectuate this transformation.

The deficient leadership that Lawrence school officials have provided appears to be attributable, in significant part, to low expectations. As did the NEASC and Murphy group reviewers who preceded us, we found evidence that Lawrence school officials and key District administrators have low expectations for the performance of many students in the District's schools. School Committee members and District administrators alike were quick to excuse and explain the low performance levels attained by District students by pointing to community demographics. Many expressed the view that "Our students are doing as well as can be expected." Several District officials and administrators sought to impress upon us that student performance in Lawrence "is as good as in Chelsea," as if that were convincing evidence of acceptable performance by the Lawrence Public Schools. They demonstrated no grasp of the significance differences between the concerned, focussed efforts underway in Chelsea to improve student achievement in that district, and the ineffective management and organizational disarray so apparent in their own district.

A high rate of student mobility was cited by some with whom we spoke as a reason that the District could not be expected to return better student performance results. It is clear from the District enrollment data that there has been a high rate of migration into the Lawrence Public Schools in recent years. We found no evidence, however, that District officials had compiled and studied data on the incidence or patterns of student mobility or the correlation of mobility to student performance outcomes for District students. Most significantly, we found no evidence that the District has implemented special programs or services to address the unique educational needs of a mobile student body.

We found reliance on general impressions and anecdotal information, rather than objective analysis and study, to be the District's usual practice. During our discussions, School Committee members readily acknowledged, but made no apology for, their failure to review and objectively evaluate available data on the performance of the District's students, or to read and thoughtfully consider the information contained in reports of the NEASC review teams that visited and evaluated Lawrence High School and several of the District's schools. "We rely on the Superintendent to keep us informed. We trust him to tell us what we need to know," was the essence of their explanation for this abdication of responsibility.

Several School Committee members stated that they finally realized, after reading the Murphy Report, that the Superintendent had not given them a true accounting of conditions at Lawrence High School. They felt, in this, that the Superintendent had let them down. Those same School Committee members, though, remained steadfast in their adherence to the perception -- again based solely on what they had been told by District administrators -- that the District's elementary schools are performing very well, and that great progress has been made in addressing the District's dropout problem. The student performance data reviewed under Finding Number 1 leads us to conclude that Lawrence officials' complacency is seriously misguided.³⁰

³⁰Lawrence school officials and administrators point to the NEASC's recent accreditation of a number of the District's elementary schools as proof of their high quality. We find in the reports of the NEASC reviewers who visited those schools evidence that many of the same deficiencies that are limiting educational opportunity for students at Lawrence High School are widespread in the District's elementary schools as well.

Against this backdrop of low expectations and general complacency about the status quo by those charged to lead the District, not surprisingly, we found no evidence that the District has established performance goals for its students or schools. Setting clear goals is an essential first step to accomplishing performance improvements. Lawrence officials have failed to fulfill this obligation.

The persistent refusal of District officials to recognize and acknowledge deficiencies in the District's schools as a necessary first step toward correcting those inadequacies is the root cause of many of the deficiencies that we identified in our review of the District's operations. The other critical aspect of leadership that Lawrence school officials have failed to demonstrate is the capacity to inspire and unify others to make needed changes.

The changes that are needed in the Lawrence Public Schools cannot be accomplished without the active involvement and shared commitment of the whole community. Students, teachers, school administrators, and City officials all need to "buy in" to a plan for change, and all need to feel like respected and valued contributors to the improvement process. Lawrence school officials, having themselves failed to see and embrace the need for changes in their schools, have done nothing to inspire and forge unity amongst the various "stakeholder" groups that are part of the Lawrence school community.

Rather than unity of purpose and effective collaboration among various groups in the Lawrence school community, we found a lack of vision in the District to guide improvement efforts. We found evidence of a contentious relationship between the former Superintendent and the local teachers union, alienation between school staff and central office administrators, a competitive relationship between Lawrence school district and City officials over the financial resources that have been provided to the City under Education Reform, and a sense among the District's small but committed group of active parents that local politics and personalities, rather than concern for the education of the City's children, are often the dominant forces influencing the decisions and actions of their District's leaders.

B. Failure to Focus on the Accomplishment of Priority Objectives

Because District official have not established specific performance goals, and have not objectively assessed their schools and identified barriers to improved student achievement that must be removed, the "improvement efforts" that the District has made are generic, unfocussed and ineffective. In each of the last two years Lawrence school administrators have prepared what they titled a "Strategic Plan." The title on these documents is, however, a misnomer. The documents demonstrate some effort to plan, and identify the work activities that District administrators plan to carry out during the year. The plans Lawrence administrators have developed, however, are not "strategic." They do not identify priority objectives for the District to accomplish to move it closer to a defined goal, and they do not chart a course of action to ensure that the District's top priority objectives for the year will be accomplished.³¹

The District's plans instead list, in general terms, "priority areas" to be expanded or improved. Many of the

³¹ Former Superintendent Scully provided us with a list (undated) of priorities that the School Committee reportedly had agreed upon at some point in 1996 or early 1997. The four items on the top of that list are: 1) reduce class size; 2) full day kindergarten/extended learning opportunities; 3) new High School; 4) emphasis on measurement of performance and achievement. As far as we could determine no "strategic plans" specifically tailored to the accomplishment of these priorities were ever developed by District administrators. By the time of our visits to the District in the fall of 1997, little appeared to have been done to advance the accomplishment of any of these priorities.

“objectives” listed (e.g., “continue curriculum councils,” “expand testing program,” “expand professional development program”) are really tactics, not objectives. A number of objectives listed in the District’s plans **are** strategically important. However, these objectives are buried among a long list of others of far less strategic significance. One gets no sense from the District’s planning documents which of the objectives listed have priority, and which “action steps” should be the focal point of District administrators’ efforts.

District administrators’ failure to identify and focus on the accomplishment of priority objectives is apparent. There is evidence of well intended “improvement” activity in the District, but it is not effectively coordinated, and has no well defined focus or objective. Lawrence school officials and administrators clearly have not focused adequate attention and effort on accomplishing what, in our view, must be the District’s top priority objectives:

- 1) implementing a coherent plan to support the acquisition of a high level of English language proficiency by all District students;
- 2) improving the effectiveness of classroom instruction, using student and teacher performance assessments to identify the specific areas of improvement needed, and providing targeted staff training and coaching to accomplish those improvements;
- 3) increasing the commitment of students and parents to high achievement by communicating high expectations and employing strategies to increase direct teacher/parent communication and collaboration;
- 4) establishing alternative programs and services to meet the needs of special populations within the student body at the High School;
- 5) formulating and implementing a new administrative and organizational structure for Lawrence High School, and correcting other continuing deficiencies that are a barrier to the School’s reaccreditation; and
- 6) developing plans, and pursuing City and State support, for the construction or acquisition of the facilities needed to adequately house the District’s programs.

Each of these priorities is discussed below.

1. The need for a coherent plan to support the acquisition of a high level of English language proficiency by all District students;

The District urgently needs to implement comprehensive, interdisciplinary instructional strategies to promote and support higher levels of English language proficiency by all students for whom English is a second language. The NEASC and Murphy reports, as well as the Department’s Coordinated Program Review report, document serious deficiencies in the programs and services that the District provides to limited English proficient students enrolled in the District’s transitional bilingual education (“TBE”) program.³² These must be addressed promptly. The District has increased the number of TBE teachers as program enrollment has grown, but little else appears to have been done in recent years to enhance the quality or effectiveness of this

³² The cited deficiencies include: class sizes over legal limits; lack of appropriate materials; inadequately qualified teaching staff; removal of bilingual aides from assigned classes to fill in as substitute teachers; limited participation of TBE students in certain school programs and services (art, music, physical education); full range of special education services (e.g., counseling) not available to all TBE students.

essential District program.

Of equal concern, the District needs a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to support enhanced English proficiency by the high percentage of second language learners who are not in transitional bilingual programs, but are in the District's regular education program. The District appears to have taken no steps to assess and address the distinct educational needs of these students.

To promote higher achievement by Lawrence's many second language learners,³³ all teachers in the Lawrence Public Schools, whatever the subject matter of their instruction, must take an active role in fostering English language learning among their students. To achieve this result, District leaders must make this a priority and work with teachers and principals to plan training and supports so that English language acquisition support is integrated into the teaching that occurs in all disciplines.

2. The need to improve classroom instruction

The NEASC reports on several Lawrence's elementary schools, as well as the NEASC and Murphy report on the High School, identify the need for more rigorous academic standards, improved curricular articulation and alignment, integration of revised curriculum into instruction, more collaboration across disciplines, expanded use of varied instructional approaches, increased use of classroom technology, and use of assessment to inform teaching. In other words, to achieve better educational outcomes for Lawrence students, the faculty at Lawrence's schools need to become more effective teachers.

For Lawrence teachers to become more effective, attitudes and individual school organizations and schedules, in many cases, will have to change. The District's current collective bargaining agreement with its teachers³⁴, and the District's current approach to professional development, will have to change. Targeted, on site teacher training and opportunities for coordinated planning and systematic staff collaboration are needed to accomplish specific instructional improvements that clearly are needed in all of the District's schools.

The information we have reviewed indicates that improvement initiatives of various sorts are ongoing at many of the District's elementary schools. These efforts are commendable, but they are fragmented and inadequately supported. The District lacks a coherent plan for improving the effectiveness of instruction in its classrooms. School site administrators must assume responsibility for assessing the strengths and weaknesses, and identifying specific instructional improvements needed, at individual schools. The District, however, also has an important role to play. It must ensure that school site administrators complete this needs assessment and improvement planning process. Further, it must provide coherent and consistent support for the accomplishment of instructional improvement by formulating policies, implementing programs, and making resource allocation decisions that promote better teaching. Lawrence school officials have not taken effective actions to guide and support improved teaching by the District's teachers.

³³ Seventy-six percent of the District's students, as of October 1, 1997, come from homes where Spanish is the dominant language spoken.

³⁴ Under the current contract, teachers are permitted to arrive at school and leave school when their students arrive and leave. No provision is made for teachers to be present after school or on days when students are not present for coordinated planning, staff collaboration, or targeted staff development. The contract requires teachers to complete 18 hours of professional development per year, but teachers determine what professional development activities they will undertake.

3. The need to increase the commitment of students and parents to high achievement

To succeed academically students must be consistent, productive participants in school, and must read, do homework, and continue learning during out-of-school time. Perhaps most important, they must value learning and believe that they are capable of it. Teachers and parents each have important roles to play in motivating and supporting students to succeed in school. When teachers and parents communicate and collaborate in this effort, students reap the benefits.

The prevalence of low expectations by school officials, administrators, and teachers, and the District's failure to set student performance goals, has negatively affected the expectations and level of school engagement of many students and parents. Effective leadership is needed to challenge and change this attitude. The District's failure to analyze and consider its own data on attendance and suspension, and assess what steps other than truancy follow-up the District could take to improve the continuity of student participation in scheduled instruction, is a factor which impedes the potential for improved students outcomes.

There is evidence that Lawrence officials have made some efforts to improve school/home communications by translating notices and report cards, employing a bilingual parent liaison for each school, and promoting parent involvement in advisory councils at both the school and District level. We did not, however, find any evidence of District strategies to promote direct teacher/parent contact.

The District has made no provision, in its contract with District teachers, for teachers to be available before or after regular school hours to meet individually with students or confer with parents.³⁵ Moreover, the District has failed to take actions to facilitate the possibility of direct communication and collaboration between the District's overwhelmingly white, English speaking teachers and administrators and the predominantly Hispanic, often limited English proficient parents of District students.

As far as we could discern, the District has adopted no policies, and has made no systematic effort, to encourage District administrators and teachers to acquire at least rudimentary Spanish language skills so that they could communicate directly, on at least simple matters, with their students' parents. We also found no evidence of initiative, on the part of District leaders to ensure that Lawrence teachers are familiar with, and sensitive to, the heritage, cultural traditions, beliefs and social norms of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other Central and South American countries and cultures from which a large percentage of the District's families have recently immigrated.³⁶

These steps, if taken, could make District teachers more effective with their students and more capable of forging productive alliances with students' parents. We find the District remiss in having failed to employ these or other strategies to facilitate communication, collaboration, and a spirit of partnership between Lawrence Public School teachers and parents, on behalf of the students the District exists to serve.

4. The need to establish alternative programs and services for high school students

During our discussions, teachers at Lawrence High School identified the need for alternative programs and placements for high school age students as a top priority. The District needs alternative programs for high school age students who 1) are behaviorally disruptive, 2) lack the fundamental academic skills necessary to

³⁵ Some may do so voluntarily, but may teachers, we were told, leave school as soon as the student instructional day ends, as their contract permits.

³⁶ The District has included Spanish language instruction and some cross-cultural awareness programs in its catalogue of voluntary professional development offerings.

participate successfully in high school level course work, and 3) enroll in or return to the school after an extended absence mid-semester, when there is inadequate opportunity to make up material already covered in a one semester long course. NEASC reviewers and the Murphy group also make note of this need in their reports. The absence of programs designed to meet the particular educational needs of these special populations seriously disrupts the instruction provided to the rest of the High School's students.

When we met with then Superintendent Scully, he acknowledged this need but explained that his plan for such a program was tied up in a "battle with the union." When we spoke with the union president, he explained that teachers want an alternative program that runs concurrent with the high school day; the Superintendent's plan was for an alternative program during after school hours. To enable the District to make needed improvements in priority areas such as this, an effective alliance needs to be forged between the District's teachers and Superintendent, and both need to exercise flexibility and creativity to ensure that the needed result is achieved. It is clear that the relationship between the District's former Superintendent and the Lawrence teachers union leadership did not have these characteristics. The continuing lack of adequate programs to meet the needs of certain segments of the High School population is one casualty of that failed relationship.

5. The need to reorganize the high school

There is no excuse for District officials' and administrators' persistent failure to correct the serious, long-standing deficiencies in administration, curriculum and instruction, personnel, facilities and equipment at Lawrence High School. A detailed accounting of those deficiencies was provided to the District by the NEASC on multiple occasions from 1990, when the High School was warned that continued failure to improve could result in loss of accreditation, through 1997 when the School's accreditation was ultimately withdrawn. District leaders either failed to read these reports, or having read them, failed to understand or have proper concern for the message they conveyed.

Many of the deficiencies related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, and bilingual education that NEASC reviewers found at the High School are, as the NEASC elementary school review reports show, prevalent throughout the District. District level initiatives and systemic change are needed to improve the performance of all District schools in these areas. If the district formulates and implements comprehensive plans to accomplish the priorities discussed above, many of the High School's long-standing deficiencies should be ameliorated.

In addition, some issues particular to the high school concerning leadership, organizational structure, school governance, and facilities, must be resolved before the High School can hope to regain its accreditation. The former Superintendent reported that he tried to reorganize the High School in order to get the Department Head positions moved out of the bargaining unit and redefine certain job descriptions, but the teachers' union opposed his proposal and the School Committee sided with the teachers. After that rebuff, Mr. Scully apparently decided to direct his attention elsewhere. We found no evidence of any subsequent efforts by District leaders to improve the High School's organization and governance to increase the school's capacity to more effectively serve the needs of its students.³⁷ In our meeting with High School teachers, we were told that certain members of the faculty had offered proposals to the Superintendent and the High School principal to address the school's problems, but these proposals received no response.

³⁷ We think it no coincidence that among the long-standing uncorrected, facilities and equipment deficiencies at the High School cited by the NEASC were the School's seriously inadequate science labs. Two of the local teachers' union officers teach in the High School science department; the union president heads that department.

The High School has, among its faculty, many highly trained and seasoned educators who, we think, could contribute much to the improvement of the School. Many members of the High School faculty have, however, become cynical about the prospects for improvement, are distrustful of District officials, and are dangerously content to expound on the failures of others rather than step up to offer the leadership that will be required to achieve change. It is crucial that the District employ as the High School's new principal an experienced, energetic, and preferably bilingual, secondary school administrator who has the skills needed to lead an effective process of change and improvement at the School. It will, however, ultimately be up to the School's faculty to accept responsibility, and contribute needed leadership, to make those improvements happen.

6. The need for new school facilities

Parents, teachers, school administrators, and school officials in Lawrence are all keenly aware of the District's need for more space to adequately house the District's much expanded and still growing student population. Most with whom we spoke identified the District's pressing need for adequate school facilities as its top priority.

We share the view that acquisition of adequate school facilities must be a top priority objective for District officials. The significant enrollment growth that the District has experienced in recent years has made its schools untenably overcrowded. The fact that a large number of the City's existing schools were built in the early years of this century, with classrooms much smaller than current standards and inadequate space for programs that require special equipment or facilities, further exacerbates the problem.

The District's current facilities are grossly inadequate to meet the educational needs of its students. Expanded and updated facilities are needed to enable the District to

- * *decrease class sizes so that students can receive more individual attention and have more opportunities to actively participate in classroom interaction;*
- * *provide adequate classroom space for exploratory learning, small group instruction, educational technology, and other student-centered instructional techniques;*
- * *provide adequate program spaces so that all students at all schools participate in a full range of programs and services (e.g., art, music, science, technology, physical education, and counseling); and*
- * *make space available for the re-introduction of full-day kindergarten.*

While District officials have prioritized the **need** for more school space for both their elementary and high school programs, they do not appear to have given priority to the pursuit of a plan to meet this need. In 1993, District officials formulated a ten year, eight phase, plan for construction and renovation of District schools. Only the first project on that plan, construction of South Lawrence East Elementary School, which opened in 1995, has been accomplished to date. The former Superintendent told us that he had proposed the construction of a new High School, but was unable to get support from City officials. Since 1994, we were told, the District has focused its efforts on finding ways to house students within existing school facilities and whatever spaces the District could find to lease, rather than pursuing facilities construction and renovation/expansion plans.

The failure of District officials to aggressively and consistently pursue a solution to what they themselves identified as the District's most urgent need, has greatly compromised the quality of education provided to District students. If City and District officials could not reach agreement, the assistance of State officials should have been sought to help formulate plans to resolve the District's critical school facilities needs.

Immediate, collaborative action by District, City and State officials is urgently needed to advance plans for the construction of new and/or renovated and expanded school facilities to serve students enrolled in the Lawrence Public Schools.

C. Failure to Implement Accountability and Evaluation Systems

We find that the Lawrence School Committee have not implemented systems to hold the District's Superintendent, central administrative leadership team, school site administrators, or teachers accountable to any particular standard of performance or the accomplishment of any specific District objectives. This glaring deficiency is a predictable by-product of the District's failure to establish clear, measurable performance goals for District students.

The District's failure to establish clear standards and expectations, implement systems to evaluate the performance of its personnel in relationship to those expectations, and use this process to target areas that need improvement, poses a serious obstacle to improvement of the District's programs and operations. The absence of effective accountability and evaluation systems in the Lawrence Public Schools is pervasive. The School Committee has failed to hold the Superintendent accountable. The Superintendent has failed to implement an accountability and evaluation system for District administrators. The District has failed to adopt and implement professional standards and performance evaluation procedures for teachers.

When asked if he had been evaluated by the Lawrence School Committee during his tenure as Superintendent, Mr. Scully provided us with a copy of an evaluation form, derived from a model circulated by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, that sets out standards to which a school superintendent should be expected to perform. Mr. Scully reported that he distributed this form to the Committee in 1995 and again in 1996 for his evaluation, but only one person ever filled it out. The Committee followed no process to ensure that an evaluation, using this format or some other of its choice, was completed. Committee members acknowledged that they did not formally evaluate Superintendent Scully's performance during his tenure as Superintendent.

When asked whether the District has a system to ensure accountability and regular evaluation of its administrators, Assistant Superintendent Gutrich provided us with a form for evaluating District administrators' performance that she indicated had been adopted by the District in the fall of 1996. During a subsequent meeting with Acting Superintendent Seifert,³⁸ we inquired further about the District's performance evaluation system for administrators. He informed us that the performance evaluation system for administrators, approved a year earlier, had not yet been implemented.

The Education Reform Act expressly requires that all districts formulate and implement professional standards and evaluation procedures for all school teachers and administrators. When we inquired whether the District has fulfilled the requirement to implement such a system to promote the accomplishment of specific improvement objectives, and identify and address deficiencies in the knowledge, skills, and present practices of District teachers, the answer again was no. Proposed standards and performance evaluation procedures were developed, but have been the subject of a protracted dispute between the District's administration and its teachers.

³⁸ The Lawrence School Committee appointed Dr. Seifert to be the District's Acting Superintendent in August 1997 after the Committee dismissed former Superintendent Scully. Dr. Seifert, formerly Superintendent of the Andover Public Schools, worked for former Superintendent Scully, as "consultant" in the District's central office, from 1994 - 1997.

D. Mismanagement of District Resources

District officials' lack of high standards and clear goals, failure to establish and adhere to priorities, and failure to implement effective accountability and evaluation systems are all part of a pattern of deficient leadership and inadequate governance that has had a predictable result -- mismanagement of the District's human and financial resources. There is clear evidence that District officials have:

- 1) appointed to key administrative positions within the District's central office and at Lawrence High School individuals who do not possess appropriate qualifications or adequate skills to perform those jobs effectively;
- 2) established an extensive, highly centralized but poorly coordinated administrative bureaucracy that is a significant drain on District resources and has not effectively promoted the accomplishment of critically needed improvements in District programs and services;
- 3) failed to establish educationally sound spending priorities and implement effective oversight procedures to ensure proper and prudent use of the District's financial resources.

1. Appointment of unqualified and inadequately skilled personnel

There is ample evidence, detailed elsewhere in this report, that a number of key administrators the District has employed to manage District programs and operations lack the qualifications or skills necessary to perform their jobs successfully. The District's hiring of an individual without secondary level teaching or administrative experience to be the High School's principal, at a time when the District had been put on notice that the High School was at risk of losing its accreditation, is perhaps the most blatant, but by no means the only, example.³⁹

The State Auditor's report makes note of several specific instances in which the District blatantly ignored the qualifying requirements for highly paid administrative positions, and appointed persons to those positions in violation of its own personnel policies. When we inquired about the State Auditor's findings that the District had hired under-qualified individuals to fill high salary administrative posts and employed consultants who had no job descriptions, School Committee members told us that Mr. Scully had "circumvented the Committee" and "violated school board policies" in taking these actions. When we asked what oversight mechanisms the Committee has to ensure that District's administrators comply with established personnel rules, they acknowledged that they have none.

2. Top-heavy, ineffective administrative bureaucracy

Our own inquiry confirmed for us the validity of the comments which appear in several of the NEASC elementary reports, the NEASC High School reports, and the Murphy group report, regarding the ineffectiveness of the District's current administrative structure. We found it to be over-centralized, poorly coordinated, and ineffective in assisting school teachers and administrators to make needed improvements in

³⁹ Both the NEASC and the Murphy group cite this decision as a contributing factor in the High School's chronic failure to improve. When we asked Mr. Scully why he made that appointment, he answered: "the High School needs stable leadership. Bill Carey lives in the City and , who was a long term employee of the system and lived in the City I thought if I gave the job to, he would stay. The High School has had six different "permanent" principals, and between those appointments, three different "acting" principals over the past twenty years, would no doubt benefit from stable leadership by an appropriately qualified and skilled secondary school administrator. We hope that, with State assistance, the District will recruit and employ such a leader for the school in the near future.

the programs and services they provide to District students. The following examples are illustrative of the deficiencies in the District's current organization.

The District has adopted a professional development system that requires a central committee to review and approve the annual 18 hour professional development proposals required of each of the District's teachers. Based on the information provided to us, we conclude that this centralized review is highly inefficient and not effective as a tool to accomplish needed improvements in the quality and appropriateness of instruction being provided to District students.⁴⁰

It was apparent from our discussion with the District's Professional Development Supervisor that the laborious process of centralized review and approval of individual teacher plans serves little purpose other than to document that each teacher has completed a plan,⁴¹ and provide the District staff with information about the kinds of professional development offerings teachers would like the District to sponsor. When we asked what the District's professional development program objectives are for this year, the program's Supervisor drew blank then answered: "to schedule professional development programs at more convenient times to increase participation." The District's Core Curriculum Administrator, in response to the same question, explained that the District has established no specific objectives for its professional development program. The primary objective of the program, she explained, is to assist the District's teachers to obtain the "professional development points" they need for recertification.

Another area of ineffective, over-centralized District administration brought to our attention relates to the purchase of school instructional materials and supplies. We were told by District principals that they are unable to spend the money expressly allocated to their school for materials and supplies without first having their proposed purchase reviewed and approved by central office administrators. They reported that this system frequently prevents them from obtaining needed materials and supplies in a timely manner, and sometimes results in central office administrators overriding their determination as to what supplementary instructional materials are necessary and appropriate.

We heard from a number of teachers that the District's central office administrators give little weight to teacher input in the selection of textbooks and related instructional materials purchased for system-wide use. They expressed dissatisfaction with these texts, and complained further that District administrators failed to provide teachers with adequate training, support, and supplemental materials to facilitate effective use of these new instructional materials.

A similar "disconnect" between the District's central office administrators and its school teachers and administrators is evident in two other areas: curriculum and educational technology. It is apparent from the various NEASC reports and the Murphy group's findings that District administrators and the committees they have convened have invested a great deal of time and effort in developing and revising curriculum guides and learning standards for the core academic subjects. What is equally apparent from the same reports is that the publication of those guides has provoked little change in the content of what is taught in the District's classrooms. Here again, the lack of a coordinated effort to reform curriculum AND provide teachers with the training and coaching required to implement successfully the new curriculum has rendered the District's curriculum improvement efforts ineffectual.

⁴⁰ School principals, in consultation with their school councils, are expected to use systematic evaluation processes to identify weaknesses in the performance of individual staff members and in the adequacy of their school's programs. They should be determining what professional development plans are appropriate for their staff.

⁴¹ This is a contract enforcement function.

Another area in which the District has invested heavily is technology. District officials were proud to report to us that they have equipped the District's schools with "state of the art" computer equipment. Our review, however, leads us to conclude that the District has not coupled its investment in computer equipment with a proportionate investment in: 1) selecting instructional software targeted to fill instructional gaps in the current programs provided to District students, and 2) systematically training District teachers to incorporate the use of this new technology in their instructional plans.

To realize the potential value for students of the District's major investment in technology, teachers need to be involved in the selection of the instructional software they will use to teach the curriculum for which they are responsible. The District's current organization does not facilitate this result. There is a District technology committee that makes technology decisions. There are District curriculum committees that make curriculum decisions. The efforts of the two groups are disassociated. Here is one example.

When we met with the central office administrator who is responsible for the District's bilingual education programs, he told us that the District had just selected a new textbook series for that program. When we asked him whether the series selected has accompanying software or can be integrated with instructional software designed to support English language instruction for second language learners, he responded that he did not know, "that would be up to the technology committee." He went on to explain that since membership on all of the District's committees is voluntary, committees like the technology committee do not necessarily have representation from all of the content areas. Hence, the need to investigate the availability of software to support instruction of the District's limited English proficient students might, he acknowledged, have been overlooked.

Two other examples of fragmentation spawned by the District's current organizational structure are noteworthy. This fall, the District was preparing to implement a new assessment and placement service for newly enrolling and re-enrolling High School students. We were told that the program will provide both language screening and academic testing. The results of these tests are to be used to facilitate students' placement in appropriate programs and class assignments. When we met with the District's administrator in charge of assessment and evaluation, she indicated that she has no responsibility for, and had not participated in, the selection of either the language or the academic assessment instruments to be used in the new testing center.

3. Ineffective fiscal controls and imprudent expenditure of District funds.

The Lawrence School Committee has failed in its responsibility to make budget allocation decisions and implement effective oversight process to ensure proper expenditure of the District's funds. Numerous examples of inappropriate and imprudent spending by the District are detailed in the State Auditor's report. The Lawrence School Committee violated the public trust in permitting these expenditures to occur.

When we asked what process the Committee uses to evaluate budget proposals and decide budget allocations, Committee members told us that they do not decide how District funds will be allocated. "We just vote the bottom line." The Superintendent has "blanket authority to realign spending," we were told.

In leaving all of the District's spending decisions to the Superintendent, the Committee has abdicated its statutory responsibility to determine how the District's resources will be deployed.

We reviewed the FY 97 budget document which was submitted to the Committee for approval last year. It is a several inch thick volume containing extensive budget detail, by "responsibility center." It contains no narrative explaining the relationship of the proposed budget to prior year spending or linking proposed budget allocations to specific programmatic or organizational objectives. The form in which the District budget proposal was presented to the Committee and the public certainly did not facilitate any meaningful review and

consideration of its contents.

We found the Committee's oversight of District spending to be inadequate as well. When we inquired about the frequency of financial reports to the Committee by the District's Finance Director, we received several different responses; from "we get monthly reports," to "every 2-3 months," to "no, but it's available if we wanted to get it." It was apparent that the Committee has established no practices to ensure systematic review of the District's finances. We were told that the Committee has a sub-committee of four Committee members review and sign off on all bills before they are paid. We witnessed Committee members engaged in this laborious process during one of our visits, and are unanimous in the opinion that this "system" of expenditure oversight is both an poor investment of Committee members' time, and a wholly inadequate means of providing oversight of the District spending patterns and practices.

Finding Number 3. Without State Intervention, Prospects for Improvement are Poor

We conclude that, without State oversight and assistance, the prospects for significant improvement in the governance and management of the Lawrence Public Schools are poor. We reach this conclusion for the following reasons.

There is an urgent need for improvements in the education provided by the Lawrence Public Schools. Local school officials have been persistently unwilling or unable to recognize the District's deficiencies and needs and take action to address them. Lawrence school officials have demonstrated neither the will nor the capacity to devise and implement effective policies, plans, programs, organizational systems, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that adequate, appropriate educational programs and services are provided to all students. Nothing that we have learned during our fact-finding gives us confidence that the newly composed Lawrence School Committee will perform to a higher standard than that of its predecessors without guidance from, and accountability to, State education officials.

The District's administration is in disarray. It must in the coming months recruit and employ a new Superintendent, administrative leadership team and High School principal. The individuals appointed to fill these posts must have the skills, expertise, and leadership capacities that will be required to accomplish a transformation in attitudes, organization, programs and practices in the Lawrence Public Schools. The District has a history of hiring, into key leadership positions, persons whose skills and expertise do not match the requirements for those positions. There is no way to ensure that the District will hire appropriately qualified individuals to fill its present critically important openings unless State officials play a direct role in recruiting and selecting candidates for those posts.

We were disappointed to find during our visits that the District's functioning does not appear to have improved significantly in the months that have passed since Mr. Scully's dismissal. The District's Acting Superintendent has kept the District's schools operating without interruption, but we were unable to discern any significant changes in district staffing, operating systems and administrative practices. The High School's Acting Principal has not demonstrated the ability to lead the School in a process of change and improvement, despite the existence of clearly articulated blueprints for action to correct deficiencies at the School offered both by the NEASC Visiting Team and by the Murphy consultant group. We conclude that significant progress at the High School is unlikely to occur until the District has a new Superintendent who makes reorganization and change at the High School a priority, and the High School has a new principal with the skills required to lead the School community through this change.

The City has recently elected a new Mayor and three new School Committee members. We hope that the newly constituted School Committee will demonstrate both the will and the capacity to provide the quality of leadership and governance the District urgently needs. However, what we have observed during our fact-finding process about the community attitudes, expectations, and norms that have contributed to many of the

Lawrence Public Schools' current problems, does not inspire our confidence that this will be the case.

Until the new Committee demonstrates a commitment to providing a high quality education to all Lawrence students, and shows that its members are capable of governing the District in a manner that advances that objective, it is imperative that the State play an active role in the District's governance. The Commissioner and Board of Education must intervene to protect the interests of Lawrence students, and to ensure prudent use of the \$80 million dollars a year investment the Commonwealth is making to bring about educationally significant improvements in the District's schools.

Since last summer, many in Lawrence have rallied around the flag of *Local Control*. We think the time has come for Lawrence school officials and their supporters to put down that banner and raise, instead, a banner in support of school excellence. The District's new Superintendent and School Committee will benefit from State guidance and support. The District needs expertise in many areas to resolve the educational challenges facing its schools. It also needs the support of City and State officials to meet pressing facilities needs. State support, technical assistance and oversight can help move the District forward to make improvements of critical importance to the lives of District students.

The Lawrence Public Schools are at a critical juncture. The District needs a catalyst to break old patterns and create a climate that fosters the adoption of new governance systems and new attitudes. Beyond that initial impetus, the District will require oversight to sustain the momentum for change.

There are among the ranks of teachers and administrators working in Lawrence's public schools many, highly trained, skilled, and experienced educators. With proper leadership, guidance and support, we are confident that the talents of these individuals can be more fully deployed to the benefit of the District's students. We fully expect that, with assistance, training, and oversight from the Commissioner and Department of Education, the Lawrence Public Schools can and will achieve significant improvements in district functions, school operations, and ultimately student performance outcomes.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The school improvement objectives the 1993 Education Reform Act was enacted to achieve are of crucial importance to the quality of life achieved by the individual students who are to be the Act's direct beneficiaries, and to the economic, social, and political well-being of the communities where today's students will ultimately live, work, and raise their families.

A clear and persistent pattern of failed leadership and inadequate governance, and resulting mismanagement of District resources, is evident in the Lawrence Public Schools. In light of the State's vital interest in the educational welfare of Lawrence students, and the extent and proportion of the State's current level of financial support to the District, we consider it imperative that the State immediately assume an active role in guiding and governing that school system.

We foresee a need for active State intervention to guide and oversee the District's management and governance for a minimum of three years. The State intervention that we believe will be required to effect critically needed improvements in the Lawrence Public Schools must include three elements:

- 1) active State involvement in the recruitment, selection, and successful engagement of a new Superintendent, administrative leadership team, and High School principal, to ensure that the individuals appointed to these positions have the skills and experience that will be needed to lead the District in a process of transformation and improvement;
- 2) systematic oversight, and ultimate control, over the District's budget, personnel, contract, policy, and

strategic planning decisions, to ensure that serious deficiencies in the District's management and operations are addressed comprehensively, strategically, and as quickly as possible; and

- 3) technical assistance, to aid the District in developing and implementing successful, efficient, cost effective strategies to meet the educational needs of all students attending the Lawrence Public Schools.

The District's problems are chronic and systemic. Under the guidance of new administrative leadership we expect significant improvement. However, many of the problems that we have discussed in this report will not be quickly or easily solved.

The State's long-term interest in enhancing the City's capacity to effectively govern and operate the Lawrence Public Schools will, in our view, be best served by a form of State intervention that guides and imposes checks on, but does not supplant, the usual roles and functions of local school officials. Intervention of this sort is viable, however, only if local officials willingly embrace a cooperative governance arrangement.

We hope that, after reviewing our findings and recommendations, the Lawrence School Committee will invite the State to share in the governance of the City's schools, and work with the Commissioner and Board of Education to formulate an agreement to facilitate such cooperation. One model that cooperative, shared City and State governance could take would be the formation of an Education Oversight Board for the Lawrence Public Schools with ultimate approval authority over District budget, personnel, contract, policy, and strategic planning decisions. Local school officials and administrators would retain primary responsibility for the execution of their respective responsibilities, but would make no final decisions of significance to the District's operations without review by and approval of the Education Oversight Board.

A similar fiscal control board, comprised of state and local officials, oversaw the City of Lawrence's budgeting and spending practices from the early 1990s until the end of 1997. Oversight by that board proved to be an effective tool to promote sound financial practices by City officials, and help ensure the City's fiscal solvency. Since the control board model is already familiar to leaders within the Lawrence community, this form of State intervention might engender greater local acceptance and support than some other, more intrusive, forms of intervention that the State could impose.

If Lawrence officials fail to submit to State oversight voluntarily, we are firm in our recommendation that the Commissioner and Board of Education take whatever steps are necessary, including the formal appointment of a receiver or receivership panel, to immediately establish State oversight and control over the Lawrence Public Schools.

Immediate, decisive action by the Commissioner and Board is required. The State must ensure that all Lawrence students are provided with the quality education they urgently need and deserve.

APPENDICES

REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING TEAM ON UNDER-PERFORMANCE BY THE LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Report Date: January 12, 1998

**LIST OF MEMBERS
LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FACT FINDING TEAM**

Robert Addelson, Finance Director for the Town of Needham. He formerly worked as chief of municipal data management for the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. In that role, one of his responsibilities was serving as Chairman of the Lawrence Fiscal Oversight Board reviewing all city finance matters.

Juliane Dow, Legal Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Education. She was instrumental in developing the Massachusetts regulations for under-performing schools, and is the Department's legal expert in regard to the Education Reform foundation budget formula. She formerly worked as a Massachusetts Assistant Attorney General.

Manthala (Matt) George, Jr., who served as Superintendent of the Brockton Public Schools from 1984 to his retirement in December, 1994. He has more than 30 years experience in public education in Brockton, a large urban school district.

Frank W. Haydu III, Chairman of Haydu and Lind of Wellesley, developer of senior living projects. He formerly was a member of the Massachusetts Board of Education, founder of Wesray Capital Corp., managing director of Kidder Peabody, and served as the interim CEO of the New England Medical Center.

Vidal Perez, Rhode Island state liaison to the Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. He formerly was Director of the Latino Family Services Unit of Family Service, Inc. in Providence, RI. Fluent in Spanish, he co-chaired the Rhode Island Governor's Advisory Commission on Hispanic Affairs from 1991 to 1994.

Lawrence Public Schools - Enrollment

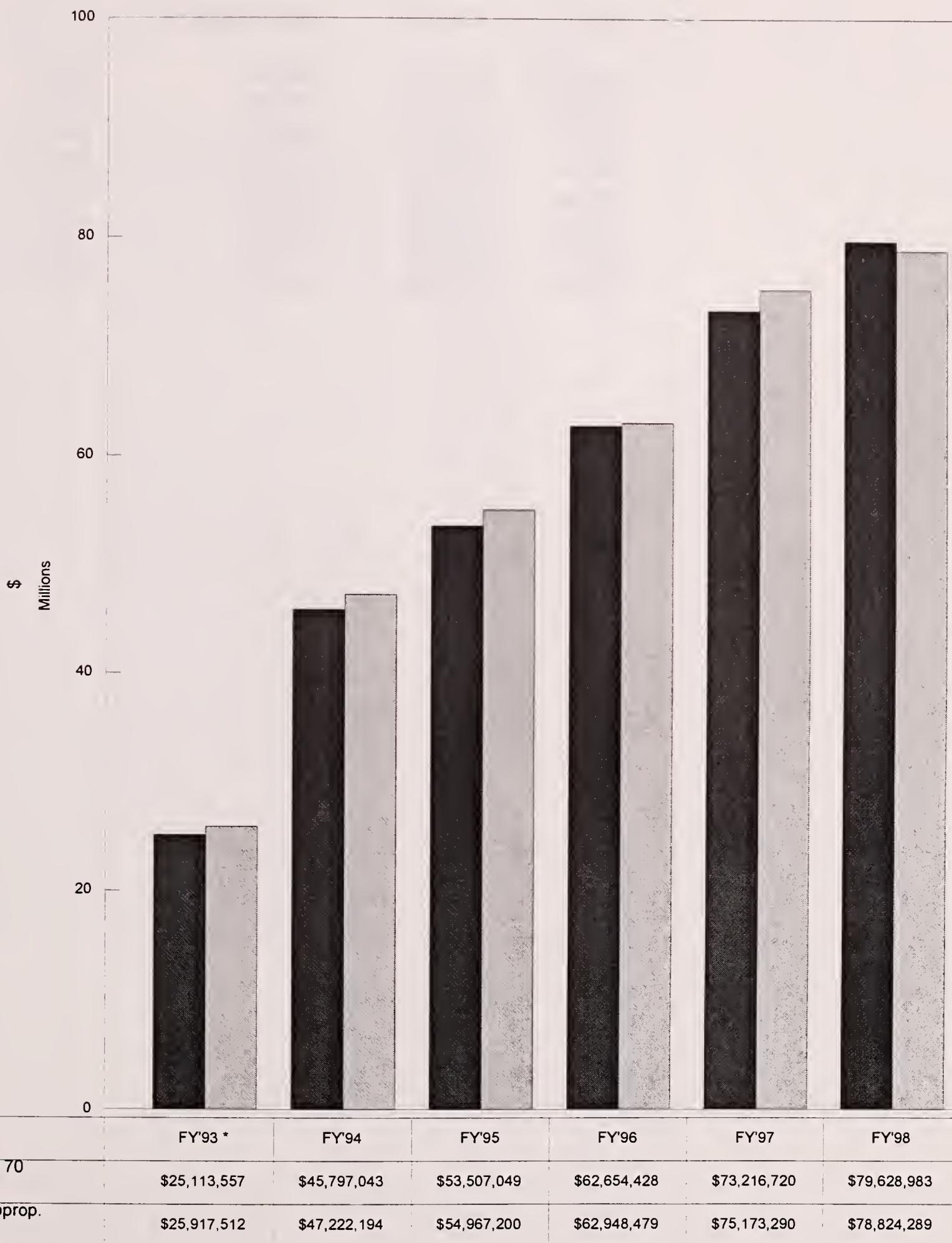
Year	Total Enrollment	Percent Change from previous year	Low Income Students Percent of Total		1st Language-Spanish Percent of Total		LEP Students-Spanish Percent of Total
			5050	60.9%	*	*	
1978-79	8288	-1.05%	4851	59.2%	*	*	*
1979-80	8201	-1.74%	5060	62.8%	*	*	*
1980-81	8058	1.72%	4705	57.4%	*	*	*
1981-82	8197	3.12%	4985	59.0%	2679	31.7%	1099 13.0%
1982-83	8453	1.50%	4803	56.0%	3465	40.4%	1269 14.8%
1983-84	8580	1.84%	5300	60.7%	3837	43.9%	1450 16.6%
1984-85	8738	7.10%	5705	61.0%	4205	44.9%	1990 21.3%
1985-86	9358	4.38%	6147	62.9%	4713	48.2%	2389 24.5%
1986-87	9768	2.95%	6603	65.7%	5171	51.4%	2743 27.3%
1987-88	10056	3.21%	7243	69.8%	5935	57.2%	2996 28.9%
1988-89	10379	3.10%	7517	70.2%	6395	59.8%	3184 29.8%
1989-90	10701	0.22%	7360	68.6%	6593	61.5%	3299 30.8%
1990-91	10725	1.10%	6982	64.4%	7649	70.5%	3479 32.1%
1991-92	10843	-3.33%	6793	64.8%	7388	70.5%	3528 33.7%
1992-93	10482	2.57%	7568	70.4%	7770	72.3%	3760 35.0%
1993-94	10751	2.58%	7216	65.4%	8083	73.3%	4034 36.6%
1994-95	11028	2.97%	9395	82.7%	8379	73.8%	4309 37.9%
1995-96	11355	2.60%	8814	75.7%	8559	73.5%	4001 34.3%
1996-97	11650	3.90%	8497	70.2%	9241	76.3%	3446 28.5%
1997-98	12104						

* Data not available.

Enrollment data is reported as of October 1 of the school year and is collected on the Individual School Report.

Lawrence Public Schools

FY'93 - FY'98 Chapter 70 and School Committee Appropriation



*In FY'93 Lawrence also received an EEO grant (\$15,067,751) and a Per Pupil grant (\$1,084,300) which were added to Chapter 70 in FY'94.

Lawrence Public Schools

Summary of all day programs

	Regular Day	Bilingual	Overall
FY'90	\$2,953	\$2,876	\$3,668
FY'91	\$2,877	\$3,476	\$3,616
FY'92	\$2,859	\$3,093	\$3,638
FY'93	\$3,413	\$3,555	\$4,088
FY'94	\$3,594	\$3,785	\$4,565
FY'95	\$4,294	\$4,413	\$5,275
FY'96	\$4,617	\$4,276	\$5,520
FY'97	\$5,148	\$5,137	\$6,358

**SCHEDULE 19
ANNUAL SCHOOL BUDGET
1997-1998**

A.1 APPROPRIATION BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

	REGULAR DAY	SPECIAL EDUCATION	BILINGUAL	CHAPTER 74 OCCUPATIONAL DAY	EXPANDED PROG FOR LOW INCOME	ADULT EDUCATION	OTHER PROGRAMS	UNDISTRIBUTED	TOTAL
7010 Administration(1000)									3,455,306
7020 Employee Benefits Administration (1500)									28,808
7030 Instructional Services(2000)	24,222,033	9,342,553	9,359,101	48,411	1,936,930	538,215			53,385,496
7040 Pupil Support Services(3100,3200)									1,912,888
7050 Pupil Transportation(3300)	720,518	1,737,501						100,000	2,558,019
7060 Food Service(3400)									0
7070 Student Body Activities(3500)									866,323
7080 Operations and Maintenance(4000)									6,036,479
7090 Extraordinary Maintenance(4300)	*								0
7100 Employer Retirement Contributions (5100)									2,815,701
Insurance for Active Employees (5200)									5,466,296
7110 Insurance Retired School Employees(5250)									2,815,701
7120 Other Non Employee Insurance(5260)									5,466,296
7130 Rent (5300)									0
7140 Debt Service-Short Term Interest(5400)									130,400
7150 Debt Service-Short Term Interest-BANS(5450)									387,643
7155 Debt Service-Short Term Interest-BANS(5450)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	387,643
7160 Other Fixed Charges(5500)									0
7170 Other Community Services(6000)									0
7180 Non-Public Transportation (6900)									0
7190 Fixed Assets(7000)									0
7200 Long-Term Debt Retirement/Sch Construction(8100)									0
7210 Long-Term Debt Service/Sch Construction(8200)									0
7220 Long-Term Debt Service/Educ &Other (8400,8600)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7280 Payments to Other Districts(91,92,9300)SpEd Thru hrs									1,780,930
7290 School Choice/Charter Schools									0
7300 Payments to Collaboratives(9400)									0
7310 Regional School Assessments (9500)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7320 TOTAL APPROPRIATION BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE	24,942,551	12,860,984	9,359,101	48,411	1,936,930	538,215	0	29,138,097	78,824,289
PLEASE INDICATE AMOUNT REPORTED ON LINE 7030 WHICH IS BUDGETED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT									
7350 Professional Development (2350)	582,572	600,948						FY'98 BUDGET	600,948

**SCHEDULE 19
ANNUAL SCHOOL BUDGET
1997-1998**

A.2 ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES BY CITY/TOWN

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	REGULAR DAY	SPECIAL EDUCATION	BILINGUAL	CHAPTER 74 OCCUPATIONAL DAY	EXPANDED PROG FOR LOW INCOME	ADULT EDUCATION	OTHER PROGRAMS	UNDISTRIBUTED	TOTAL
7400 General Administrative Services(1000)								569,293	569,293
7410 Employee Benefits Administration (1500)							25,849	25,849	
7415 Bonded Instruction (2000) *									
7420 Educational Media (2500)							5,040	5,040	
7430 Pupil Support Services(3100,3200)							95,637	95,637	
7440 Pupil Transportation(3300)								0	
7450 Operations and Maintenance(4000)							599,905	599,905	
7460 Extraordinary Maintenance(4300) *								0	
7470 Employer Retirement Contributions (5100)								0	
7480 Insurance for Active Employees (5200)								0	
7490 Insurance Retired School Employees(5250)								0	
7500 Other Non Employee Insurance(5260)								0	
7510 Rent (5300) *								0	
7520 Debt Service-Short Term Interest(5400)								0	
7520 Debt Service-Short Term Interest-BANS(5450)								0	
7530 Other Fixed Charges (5500)								0	
7540 Other Community Services(6000)								0	
7550 Non-Public Transportation(6900)								0	
7560 Fixed Assets(7000)								0	
7570 Long-Term Debt Retirement/Sch Construction(8100)								0	
7580 Long-Term Debt Service/Sch Construction(8200)								0	
7640 Long-Term Debt Service/Educ & Other (8400,8600)								0	
7650 Payments to Other Districts(91,92,9300)					2,983,676			2,983,676	
7660 School Choice(Charter Schools)					330,354			330,354	
7670 Payments to Collaboratives(9400)								0	
7680 Regional School Assessments (9500)								0	
7690 TOTAL EXPENDITURES BY CITY/TOWN				3,314,030	0	0	0	1,295,724	4,609,754
Fiscal Year 1999 Long Term Capital Debt (Principal and interest) for School Construction(\$100,8200)									
7695 FY 99 Long-Term Debt /Sch Construction(\$100,8200)								0	
					FY'99	FY'98 BUDGET	FY'97 ACTUAL		
					0		6,419,904		

Dropout Rates (Grades 9-12) - Lawrence Public Schools and Selected Comparison Districts

Year	Lawrence Unadj.	Lawrence Adj.	Boston Unadj.	Boston Adj.	Chelsea Unadj.	Chelsea Adj.	Holyoke Unadj.	Holyoke Adj.	Lowell Unadj.	Lowell Adj.	State Unadj.	State Adj.
1986-87	14.5	14.4	14.4	13.4	17.1	8.3	13.6	14.1	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.4
1987-88	14.8	13.6	13.4	11.3	16.6	10.0	14.1	11.2	4.9	4.9	4.6	4.6
1988-89	15.5	15.5	11.0	10.7	17.6	8.2	10.2	9.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
1989-90	14.3	19.9	9.6	8.5	20.1	11.5	5.4	5.9	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.3
1990-91	15.7	14.0	8.5	7.6	13.3	8.5	8.3	4.2	3.1	3.1	3.5	3.5
1991-92	15.7	13.8	8.0	7.5	11.3	10.3	9.5	4.1	3.3	4.6	3.7	3.7
1992-93*	16.6	16.8	9.2	8.1	14.7	12.4	11.8	4.1	3.1	2.8	4.4	4.4
1993-94	16.8	8.6	9.2	7.9	7.4	9.6	8.3	3.1	2.8	4.4	3.6	3.6
1994-95	16.0	6.4	8.1	7.2	8.0	6.6	9.9	5.5	3.0	2.6	4.3	3.4
1995-96	15.8	10.7	9.0	8.4	7.5	4.0	11.3	9.8	4.1	3.1	*	*

* Data not yet available. ** The year 1992-93 was the first year in which data was collected to compute the adjusted dropout rate.

Dropout data are reported in the Year-End Indicator Report, and enrollment data are derived from the Individual School Report. The unadjusted dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts reported by a school over a single one-year period, from July 1 to June 30, to the October 1 enrollment for that period. The adjusted dropout rate counts those students who drop out during the reporting year minus those students who dropout and return to school by October 1 of the following year.

Exclusion Data - Lawrence Public Schools and Selected Comparison Districts

Year	Lawrence #	Lawrence %	Boston #	Boston %	Chelsea #	Chelsea %	Holyoke #	Holyoke %	Lowell #	Lowell %	State #	State %
1986-87	48	0.5	9	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	10	0.1	350	0.0
1987-88	98	1.0	49	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.0	6	0.0	594	0.1
1988-89	115	1.1	4	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.0	27	0.2	581	0.1
1989-90	119	1.1	2	0.0	0	0.0	7	0.1	21	0.2	417	0.1
1990-91	130	1.2	15	0.0	3	0.1	8	0.1	0	0.0	432	0.1
1991-92	182	1.7	27	0.0	8	0.2	24	0.3	1	0.0	573	0.1
1992-93	200	1.9	18	0.0	0	0.0	23	0.3	6	0.0	985	0.1
1993-94	9	0.1	46	0.1	2	0.0	17	0.2	6	0.0	958	0.1
1994-95	169	1.5	72	0.1	4	0.1	52	0.7	35	0.2	1485	0.2
1995-96	264	2.3	90	0.1	5	0.1	115	1.5	30	0.2	1482	0.2
1996-97	189	1.6	109	0.2	2	0.0	26	0.3	55	0.3	1538	0.2

A student exclusion is defined as the removal of a student from participation in regular school activities for disciplinary purposes permanently, indefinitely or for more than ten consecutive days. All schools are required to submit data on student exclusions.

Average Daily Attendance Rates - Lawrence Public Schools and Comparison Districts

Year	Lawrence	Boston	Chelsea	Holyoke	Lowell	State
1987-88	89.7	88.5	88.4	90.9	90.0	92.5
1988-89	89.4	87.8	88.7	90.6	89.8	92.5
1989-90	89.8	88.6	88.8	90.5	91.1	93.1
1990-91	89.1	87.9	87.9	90.8	91.5	92.2
1991-92	89.1	87.4	88.5	89.4	90.9	93.0
1992-93	89.2	87.4	88.8	89.6	91.1	93.0
1993-94	88.9	85.8	89.3	89.7	90.0	93.1
1994-95	90.1	90.4	89.7	90.0	90.1	93.4
1995-96	90.2	90.5	89.9	90.1	90.2	93.4

The average daily attendance rate is calculated by dividing the average number of students present over the course of the school year by the average student membership for the school year. This data is collected from schools on the Year-End Indicator Report.

District Enrollment and Percentage of LEP Students - 1996-97

1996-97	Enrollment	Percent LEP
Lawrence	11,650	35.9
Boston	63,239	20.5
Chelsea	5298	23.5
Holyoke	7930	31.7
Lowell	15,729	18.0
State	935,623	4.7

Enrollment data is reported as of October 1 of that school year and is collected from schools on the Individual School Report.

Lawrence Retentions and Suspensions, 1995-6

Grade	Retentions		In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Exclusions			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	<1 mo. #	1-2 mo. #	2-6 mo. #	6 mo.-1 yr. #
PK-3	158	3.5	134	2.9	136	3.0	6	2	2	2
4	9	0.9	122	12.3	142	14.3	4	7	7	3
5	4	0.4	126	12.9	114	11.7	5	10	10	
6	12	1.3	192	20.8	194	21.0	6	12	12	1
7	13	1.4	240	26.1	223	24.2	9	32	32	3
8	18	2.1	229	26.4	209	24.1	13	41	6	1
9	115	15.0	168	21.9	207	27.0	8	37	10	3
10	90	19.4	81	17.5	86	18.5	6	11	2	1
11	52	13.0	37	9.3	55	13.8	4	2		
12	13	3.9	24	7.3	29	8.8	3	2	2	1
NA							3	4	2	
Total	484	4.3	1353	12.1	1395	12.5	67	160	31	6

In-school and out-of-school suspensions are for 10 or fewer consecutive days.

Exclusions are for more than 10 consecutive days.

Grade not reported for all exclusions.

**Lawrence Public Schools:
Test Scores, 1994-1997**

1. MEAP

Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program, statewide test for 4th, 8th and 10th graders, every two years, in reading, math, science and social studies.

Grade & Year	Subject	Avg. Score	State Avg. Score	District Pct. at Each Proficiency Level				District Partic. Rate	State Partic. Rate
				<1	1	2	3		
Grade 4, 1996	Reading	1210	1350	15	42	33	9	1	90%
	Math	1220	1330	11	45	38	5	1	73%
	Science	1210	1360	10	49	34	6	0	
	Social Studies	1220	1340	8	50	37	5	0	
Grade 4, 1994	Reading	1220	1370	10	52	29	5	4	90%
	Math	1210	1330	11	50	32	5	2	73%
	Science	1210	1350	10	50	34	5	1	
	Social Studies	1220	1340	8	50	35	6	1	
Grade 8, 1996	Reading	1210	1380	17	39	31	10	3	89%
	Math	1180	1330	16	48	30	6	1	75%
	Science	1140	1330	20	47	27	5	0	
	Social Studies	1170	1320	20	43	28	7	2	
Grade 8, 1994	Reading	1200	1370	20	42	27	8	4	89%
	Math	1160	1320	15	54	25	5	1	74%
	Science	1120	1310	23	48	24	5	0	
	Social Studies	1160	1320	19	49	25	6	1	
Grade 10, 1996	Reading	1160	1310	26	30	31	10	4	85%
	Math	1130	1310	27	42	26	5	1	
	Science	1140	1310	20	44	30	7	0	
	Social Studies	1160	1300	20	44	27	9	1	
Grade 10, 1994	Reading	1150	1300	28	37	22	8	4	56%
	Math	1140	1300	24	46	22	7	2	
	Science	1130	1300	27	42	25	4	2	
	Social Studies	1140	1300	22	48	23	6	1	

2. Iowa Tests

Iowa Test of Reading, statewide, grade 3, 1997; Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, statewide, grade 10, 1997, in reading, math, science and social studies

Grade 3 - Reading Test

	Pre-Reader	Pct. at Each Proficiency Level			Participate Rate
		Basic	Proficient	Advanced	
Lawrence	10	25	31	5	71%
State	6	21	47	22	96%

Grade 10 - Test of Basic Skills

	Reading	Percentile Rank			Participate Rate
		Math	Science	Soc. Stud.	
Lawrence	29	32	34	34	58%
State	64	58	65	62	90%

Seven districts, including Boston, were exempt from participating in the Iowa grade 10 test, and substituted some other standardized test.

3. Metropolitan Achievement Tests

Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition, a national test given by selected local districts, grades 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11

Grade	Year	Pct. Tested	National Norms: Average Percentile Scores (Regular Education Students)			Percent of students performing below grade level in reading
			Reading	Math	Language	
2	1997	56%	57	59	51	24%
	1996		56	50	49	
4	1997	68%	35	46	45	34%
	1996		33	42	42	
5	1997	69%	41	52	44	43%
	1996		40	51	43	
6	1997	73%	31	33	35	50%
	1996		26	30	33	
7	1997	70%	28	32	33	72%
	1996		35	34	36	
8	1997	73%	27	28	35	(at or below) 82%
	1996		28	28	33	
9	1997	54%	23	28	31	74%
	1996		24	31	33	73%
11	1997	52%	22	20	18	84%
	1996		20	21	22	88%

